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History.

IRELAND.

BY

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

VOL. I.

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PATERNOSTER-ROW;

AND JOHN TAYLOR,

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THE HISTORY of IRELAND.

BY

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

in Three Volumes.

VOL. I.

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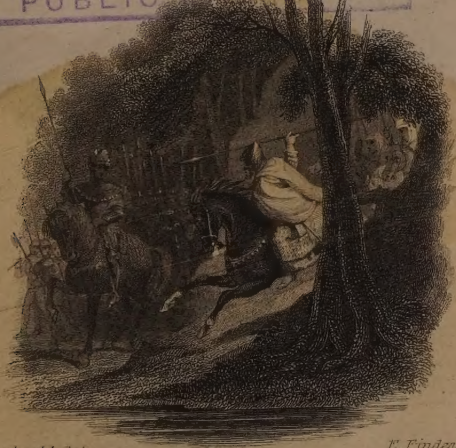

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ANALYTICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL

TABLE

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ERRATA.

Page 68. last line, for "popularum" read "popularem."
135. line 1. of note, for "Monasia" read "Menavia."
161. line 2. from bottom, for "tributarium" read "tributariam."
164. line 9. from bottom, for "Philoliac" read "Philolaic."
252. line 12. from bottom, for "vertamine" read "certamine."

THE

HISTORY OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE IRISH PEOPLE. — EARLY NOTICES OF IRELAND.

THERE appears to be no doubt that the first inhabitants of Ireland were derived from the same Celtic stock which supplied Gaul, Britain, and Spain with their original population. Her language, the numerous monuments she still retains of that most ancient superstition which the first tribes who poured from Asia into Europe are known to have carried with them wherever they went, sufficiently attest the true origin of her people. Whatever obscurity may hang round the history of the tribes that followed this first Eastern swarm, and however opinions may still vary, as to whether they were of the same, or of a different race, it seems, at least, certain, that the Celts were the first inhabitants of the western parts of Europe; and that, of the language of this most ancient people, the purest dialect now existing is the Irish.

It might be concluded, from the near neighbourhood of the two islands to each other, that the fortunes of Britain and Ireland would, in those times, be similar;

that, in the various changes and mixtures to which population was then subject, from the successive incursions of new tribes from the East, such vicissitudes would be shared in common by the two islands, and the same flux and reflux of population be felt on both their shores. Such an assumption, however, would, even as to earlier times, be rash; and, how little founded it is, as a general conclusion, appears from the historical fact, that the Romans continued in military possession of Britain for near four hundred years, without a single Roman, during that whole period, having been known to set foot on Irish ground.

The system of Whitaker and others, who, from the proximity of the two islands, assume that the population of Ireland must have been all derived from Britain, is wholly at variance, not merely with probability, but with actual evidence. That, in the general and compulsory movement of the Celtic tribes towards the west, an island, like Ireland, within easy reach both of Spain and Gaul, should have been left unoccupied during the long interval it must have required to stock England with inhabitants, seems, to the highest degree, improbable. But there exists, independently of this consideration, strong evidence of an early intercourse between Spain and Ireland, in the historical traditions of the two countries, in the names of the different Spanish tribes assigned to the latter by Ptolemy, and, still more, in the sort of notoriety which Ireland early, as we shall see, acquired, and which could only have arisen out of her connection with those Phœnician colonies, through whom alone a secluded island of the Atlantic could have become so well known to the world.

At a later period, when the Belgic Gauls had gained such a footing in Britain, as to begin to encroach on the original Celtic inhabitants, a remove still farther to the west was, as usual, the resource of this people; and Ireland, already occupied by a race speaking a dialect of the same language, — the language common, at that period, to all the Celts of Europe, — afforded the re-

fuge from Gothic invasion * which they required. It has been shown clearly, from the names of its mountains and rivers,—those unerring memorials of an aboriginal race, — that the first inhabitants of the country now called Wales must have been a people whose language was the same with that of the Irish, as the mountains and waters of that noble country are called by Irish names.† At what time the Belgæ, the chief progenitors of the English nation, began to dispossess the original Celtic inhabitants, is beyond the historian's power to ascertain; as is also the question, whether those Belgæ or Fir-bolgs, who are known to have passed over into Ireland, went directly from Gaul, or were an offset of those who invaded Britain.

But however some of the ingredients composing their population may have become, in the course of time, common to both countries, it appears most probable that their primitive inhabitants were derived from entirely different sources; and that, while Gaul poured her Celts upon the shores of Britain, the population of Ireland was supplied from the coasts of Celtic Spain.‡ It is, at least, certain, that, between these two latter countries, relations

* Without entering here into the still undecided question, as to whether the Belgæ were Celts or Goths, I shall merely observe, that the fair conclusion from the following passage of Cæsar is, that this people were of a Gothic or Teutonic descent.

"Cum ab his quæreret, quæ civitates quantæque in armis essent, et quid in bello possent, sic reperiebat; plerosque Belgas esse ortos ab Germanis; Rhenumque antiquitus transductos, propter loci fertilitatem ibi consedisse; Gallosque, qui ea loca incolerent, expulisse."—*De Bell. Gall.* lib. ii. c. 4.

† Lhuyd's Preface to his Irish Dictionary, in the Appendix to Nicholson's Historical Library.—Lhuyd extends his remark to England as well as Wales. "Whoever takes notice," he says, "of a great number of the names of the rivers and mountains throughout the kingdom, will find no reason to doubt but the Irish must have been the inhabitants when those names were imposed on them." In other words, the first inhabitants of Britain and Wales were Celts or Gael.

The author of Mona Antiqua has, without intending it, confirmed the truth of Lhuyd's remark, by stating, that the vestiges of old habitations still to be seen on the heaths and hills of Anglesey, are called, to this day, Cyttie'r Gwyddelod, or the Irishmen's Cottages. These words, too, it appears (see Preface to O'Brien's Irish Dictionary), "should more properly and literally be rendered Irishmen's habitations, or seats; for the Irish word Cathair, of which Ceitir is a corruption, signifies either a city or town, or habitation."

‡ That the Irish did not consider themselves as being of Gaulish origin, appears from their having uniformly used the word Gall to express a foreigner, or one speaking a different language.

of affinity had been, at a very early period, established; and that those western coasts of Spain, to which the Celtic tribes were driven, and where, afterwards, Phœnician colonies established themselves, were the very regions from whence this communication with Ireland was maintained.

The objections raised to this supposed origin and intercourse, on the ground of the rude state of navigation in those days, are deserving of but little attention. It was not lightly, or without observation, such a writer as Tacitus asserted, that the first colonising expeditions were performed by water, not by land*; and however his opinion, to its whole extent, may be questioned, the result of enquiry into the affinities of nations seems to have established, that at no time, however remote, has the interposition of sea presented much obstacle to the migratory dispositions of mankind. The history, indeed, of the Polynesian races, and of their common origin—showing to what an immense extent, over the great ocean, even the simplest barbarians have found the means of wafting the first rudiments of a people†—should incline us to regard with less scepticism those coasting and, in general, land-locked voyages, by which most of the early colonisation of Europe was effected;—at a period, too, when the Phœnicians, with far more knowledge, it is probable, of the art of navigation, than modern assumption gives them credit for, were to be seen in the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the Atlantic,—every where upon the waters. With respect to the facilities of early intercourse between Ireland and Spain, the distance from Cape

* Nec terra olim, sed classibus advehebantur, qui mutare sedes quærebant.—*German.* c. 2.

† "A comparison of their languages (those of the Polynesian races) has furnished a proof, that all the most remote insular nations of the Great Ocean derived their origin from the same quarter, and are nearly related to some tribes of people inhabiting a part of the Indian continent, and the isles of the Indian Archipelago."—*Pritchard's Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations.*

Dr. Rennel, in noticing some doubts respecting the circumnavigation of Africa by the Egyptians, says sensibly, "Since so many of these (ancient) authorities concur in the belief that Africa had been sailed round, we cannot readily guess why it should be doubted at present, unless the moderns wish to appropriate to themselves all the functions and powers of nautical discovery."—*On the Geographical System of Herodotus.*

Ortegal to Cape Clear, which lie almost opposite to each other, north and south, is not more than 150 leagues,—two thirds of which distance, namely, as far as the island of Ushant, might all have been performed within sight of land.* Reserving, however, all further investigation into this point, till we come to treat of the different colonies of Ireland, I shall here endeavour to collect such information respecting her early fortunes as the few, but pregnant, notices scattered throughout antiquity afford.

With one important exception, it is from early Greek writers alone that our first glimpses of the British isles, in their silent course through past ages, are obtained; nor was it till a comparatively late period that the Greeks themselves became acquainted with their existence. The jealousy with which the Phœnicians contrived to conceal from their Mediterranean neighbours these remote sources of their wealth, had prevented, even in the time of Homer, more than a doubtful and glimmering notion of a Sea of Isles beyond the Pillars from reaching the yet unexcursive Greeks. Enough, however, had transpired to awaken the dreams alike of the poet and the adventurer; and while Homer, embellishing the vague tales which he had caught up from Phœnician voyagers †, placed in those isles the abodes of the Pious and the Elysian fields of the Blest‡, the thoughts of the trader and speculator were not less actively occupied in discovering treasures without end in the same poetic regions. Hence all those popular traditions of the Fortunate Islands, the Hesperides §, the Isle of Calypso,—creations called up in these "unpathed waters," and

* See Smith's History of Cork, book i. chap. i. According to Appian, the Spaniards of his time used to perform the passage to Britain, with the tide in their favour, in half a day.—"Quando in Britanniam, unà cum æstu maris transvehuntur quæ quidem trajectio dimidiati diei est."—*Iberica.*

† "That Homer had the opportunities mentioned, and that he did not neglect to improve them, will best appear by considering what he has really learned from the Phœnicians. This will be a certain proof of his having conversed with them."—*Blackwell, Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, sect. 11.

‡ Ὁ τοινυν ποιητης τας τοσαυτας στρατιας επι τα ισχατα της Ιβηριας ἱστορηκως, συνθανομενος δε και πλουτον και τας αλλας αρετας (οἱ γαρ Φοινικες εδηλουν τουτο) ενταυθα τον των ευσεβων επλασε χωρον και το Ηλυσιον πεδιον.—*Strabon.* lib. iii.

§ Plutarch. de Facie in Orb. Lun. — Hesiod. Theogon.

adopted into the poetry of the Greeks, before any clear knowledge of the realities had reached them. In the "Argonautics*," a poem written, it is supposed, more than 500 years before the Christian era, there is a sort of vague dream of the Atlantic, in which Ireland alone, under the Celtic name of Iernis, is glanced at, without any reference whatever to Britain. It is thought, moreover, to have been by special information, direct from the Phœnicians†, that the poet acquired this knowledge; as it appears from Herodotus, that not even the names of the Cassiterides, or British Isles, were known in Greece when he wrote; and the single fact, that they were the islands from which tin was imported, comprised all that the historian himself had it in his power to tell of them.

The very first mention that occurs of the two chief British isles is in a work‡ written, if not by Aristotle, by an author contemporary with that philosopher,—the treatise in question having been dedicated to Alexander the Great. The length of time, indeed, during which the monopoly of the trade in tin by the Phœnicians was kept not only inviolate, but secret, forms one of the most striking marvels of ancient history. For although, as far back as about 400 years before Hero-

* Written, it is supposed, by Onomacritus, a cotemporary of Pisistratus. There appears to be no good reason for doubting the high antiquity of this poem. The treatise, in defence of its authenticity, by Ruhnkenius, who shows it to have been quoted by two ancient grammarians, seems to have set the question at rest. (Epist. Crit. 2.) Archbishop Usher, in referring to the mention of Ierne in this poem, adds, that "the Romans themselves could not produce such a tribute to their antiquity" (Ecclesiar. Antiq. c. 16.): and Camden, to secure a share of the high honour for his country, first supposes that a nameless island, described by the poet, must be Britain; and then changes the sole epithet by which it is described, for one more suited to his purpose:—"Quæ necessariò sit hæc nostra, Λευκαιον χειρσον, id est, albicantem terram dixisse quam ante pauculos versus Νησον πτυκτεσσαν, pro λευκητεσσαν, vocasse videatur." — *Camden, Britan.*

† "Nempe edoctus à Phœnicibus, Græcis enim tunc temporis hæc loca erant inaccessa."—*Bochart, Geog. Sac.* lib. i. c. 38. The epithet, Cronian, applied by this Orphic poet to the sea in the neighbourhood of the Hyperboreans, is, according to Toland, purely Irish; the word Croin, in that language, signifying Frozen.

This circumstance of Ireland having been known to the Argonauts, is thus alluded to by a Dutch writer of the sixteenth century, Adrian Junius:—

> "Illa ego sum Graiis olim glacialis Ierne
> Dicta, et Jasoni puppis bene cognita nautis."

‡ De Mundo.

dotus wrote, there had reached Homer, as we have seen, some faint glimpses of an ocean to the west, which his imagination had peopled with creations of its own, it was not till the time of Aristotle *—near a whole century after—that the Massilian Greeks had learned to explore those western regions themselves, and that, for the first time, in any writings that have come down to us, we find the two chief British islands mentioned, in the authentic treatise just referred to, under their old Celtic names of Albion and Ierne.

It is from a source, however, comparatively modern—the geographical poem of Festus Avienus—that our most valuable insight into the fortunes of ancient Ireland are derived. In the separate expeditions undertaken by Hanno and Himilco beyond the Straits, while the former sailed in a southern direction, the latter, shaping his course to the north, along the shores of Spain, (the old track of Phœnician voyagers between Gades and Gallicia,) stretched from thence across the ocean to the Œstrumnides, or Tin Isles. Of this expedition, a record, or journal, such as Hanno has left of his Periplus, was deposited by Himilco in one of the temples of Carthage, and still existed in the fourth century, when Avienus, having access, as he mentions, to the Punic records, collected from thence those curious details which he has preserved in his Iambics†, and which furnish by far the most interesting glimpse derived from antiquity of the early condition of Ireland. The Œstrumnides, or Scilly Islands, are described, in this sketch, as two days' sail from the larger Sacred Island, inhabited by the Hiberni; and in the neighbourhood of the latter, the island

* The Athenians had already, in this philosopher's time, as he himself mentions (Œconomic. I. 2.), been advised to secure to themselves the monopoly of the Tyrian market, by buying up all the lead.

† "Hæc nos ab imis Punicorum annalibus
Prolata longo tempore edidimus tibi."
Fest. Avienus, de Oris Maritim.

It would appear from this, that the records to which Avienus had access were written in Punic,—a circumstance which, if true, says Dodwell, would afford a probable reason for the name of Himilco having been so long unknown to the Greeks: —"Ea causa satis verisimilis esse potuit cur tamdiù Græcos latuerit Himilco, etiam eos qui collegæ meminerint Hannonis." —*Dissert. de Peripli Hannonis ætate.*

of the Albiones, it is said, extends.* Though the description be somewhat obscure, yet the Celtic names of the two great islands, and their relative position, as well to the Œstrumnides as to each other, leave no doubt as to Britain and Ireland being the two places designated. The commerce carried on by the people of Gades with the Tin Isles is expressly mentioned by the writer, who adds, that "the husbandmen, or planters, of Carthage, as well as her common people, went to those isles,"—thus implying that she had established there a permanent colony.

In this short but circumstantial sketch, the features of Ireland are brought into view far more prominently than those of Britain. After a description of the hide-covered boats, or currachs, in which the inhabitants of those islands navigated their seas, the populousness of the isle of the Hiberni, and the turfy nature of its soil, are commemorated. But the remarkable fact contained in this record—itself of such antiquity—is, that Ireland was then, and had been from ancient times, designated "The Sacred Island." This reference of the date of her early renown, to times so remote as to be in Himilco's days ancient, carries the imagination, it must be owned, far back into the depths of the past, yet hardly further than the steps of history will be found to accompany its flight. Respecting the period of the expeditions of Hanno and Himilco, the opinions of the learned

* "Ast hinc duobus in Sacram, sic Insulam
Dixere prisci, solibus cursus rati est.
Hæc inter undas multum cespitem jacit,
Eamque latè gens Hibernorum colit.
Propinqua rursus insula Albionum patet.
Tartesiisque in terminos Œstrumnidum
Negociandi mos erat, Carthaginis
Etiam colonis, et vulgus inter Herculis
Agitans columnas hæc adibant æquora."

One of the reasons assigned by Dodwell for rejecting the Periplus of Hanno, as a work fabricated, after his death, by some Sicilian Greek, is the occurrence of Greek names instead of Phœnician for the different places mentioned in it. This objection, however, does not apply to the account of Himilco, as reported by Avienus, in which the old names Gadir, Albion, and Hibernia declare sufficiently their Phœnician and Celtic original.

Speaking of the Argonautics and the record of Himilco, bishop Stillingfleet says, "These are undoubted testimonies of the ancient peopling of Ireland, and of far greater authority than those domestic annals now so much extolled."—*Antiquities of the British Churches*, c. 5.

have differed; and by some their date is referred to so distant a period as 1000 years before the Christian era.* Combining the statement, however, of Pliny, that they took place during the most flourishing epoch of Carthage†, with the internal evidence furnished by Hanno's own Periplus, there is no doubt that it was, at least, before the reign of Alexander the Great that these two memorable expeditions occurred. Those "ancients," therefore, from whom the fame of the Sacred Island had been handed down, could have been no other than the Phœnicians of Gades, and of the Gallician coasts of Spain, who, through so many centuries, had reigned alone in those secluded seas, and were the dispensers of religion, as well as of commerce, wherever they bent their course. ‡

At how early a period this remarkable people began to spread themselves over the globe, the inscription legible, for many an age, on the two Pillars, near the Fount of the Magi, at Tangiers,—"We fly from the face of Joshua, the robber,"—bore striking testimony. § Nothing, indeed, can mark more vividly the remote date of even the maturity of their empire, than the impressive fact, that the famed temple which they raised, at Gades, to their Hercules, was, in the time of the Romans, one of the most memorable remains of ancient days.|| Not to go back, however, as far as the period, little less than 1500 years before our era, when their colonies first began to swarm over the waters, we need

* Nous croyons donc, que cette expédition, a dû précéder Hésiode de trente ou quarante ans, et qu'on peut la fixer vers mille ans avant l'ère Chrétienne. — *Gosselin, Recherches sur la Géographie des Anciens.*

† Et Hanno, Carthaginis potentia florente, circumvectus a Gadibus ad finem Arabiæ, navigationem eam prodidit scripto: sicut ad extera Europæ noscenda missus eodem tempore Himilco. — *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. ii. c. 67.

‡ See, for a learned and luminous view of the relations of ancient Ireland with the East, Lord Rosse's Vindication of the Will of the Rt. Hon. Henry Flood.

§ Procop. Vandal. lib. 2. c. 10.—Even this is by Bishop Cumberland considered too stinted a range of time for their colonisations. "They seem to me," he says, "to have had much more time to make their plantations than that learned man (Bochart) thought of; for, as I understand their history, they had time from about Abraham's death, which was about 370 years before Joshua invaded Canaan, from which Bochart begins."—*Notes on the Synchronism of Canaan and Egypt.*

|| Diodor. Sicul. lib. iv.

but take their most prosperous epoch, which commenced with the reign of Solomon, and supposing their sails to have then first reached the Atlantic, the date of the probable colonisation of that region must still be fixed high in time. In the days of Herodotus, by whom first vaguely, and without any certain knowledge of a sea beyond the Straits, the importation of tin from the Cassiterides is mentioned, it is hardly too much to assume that the Phœnicians had, for some time, formed a settlement in these islands. That they must have had a factory here is pretty generally conceded*: but a people, whose system it was to make colonisation the basis of their power, were assuredly not likely to have left a position of such immense commercial importance unoccupied; and the policy, first taught by them to trading nations, of extending the circle of their customers by means of colonies, was shown in the barter which they thenceforward maintained with the British Isles — exchanging their own earthen vessels, salt, and brass, for the tin, lead, and skins produced in these islands.†

There are grounds for believing, also, that to the Phœnicians, and consequently to the Greeks, Ireland was known, if not earlier, at least more intimately, than Britain.‡ We have seen that, in the ancient poem called the "Argonautics," supposed to have been written in the

* "During this commerce, it can scarce be doubted that there might be established, on the different coasts, factories for the greater convenience of trading with the natives for skins, furs, tin, and such other commodities as the respective countries then produced." — *Beauford, Druidism Revived, Collect. Hib.* No. VII.

† Μεταλλα δε εχοντες κασσιτερου και μολυβδου, χερσαιον αντι τουτων και των δερματων διαλλασσονται, και αλας, και χαλκωματα προς τους εμπορους. — *Strab. Geograph.* lib. iii.

‡ It may appear inconsistent with the claim of Ireland to priority of reputation, that the whole of the Cassiterides were, in those days, called the Britannic Isles, — a circumstance which, taken as implying that the others had derived their title from Britain, and had so far merged their reputation in hers, would doubtless indicate so far a pre-eminence on her part. The name Britannia, however, which, in Celtic, means a land of metals, was applied generically to the whole cluster of the Tin Isles, — the Isle of Man and those of Scilly included, — and being, therefore, a title common to all, could not imply, in itself, any superiority of one over another. Whether tin has been ever found in Ireland is doubtful; but lead mines, which were, at least, equally a source of lucre to the Phœnicians, have been, not long since, discovered and worked.

time of the Pisistratidæ, and by a poet instructed, it is thought, from Phœnician sources, Ierne alone is mentioned, without any allusion whatever to Britain; and in the record preserved of Himilco's voyage to these seas, while the characteristic features of the Sacred Isle are dwelt upon with some minuteness, a single line alone is allotted to the mere geographical statement that in her neighbourhood the Island of the Albiones extends.

Another proof of the earlier intimacy which the Phœnician Spaniards maintained with Ireland, is to be found in the Geography of Ptolemy, who wrote at the beginning of the second century, and derived chiefly, it is known, from Phœnician authorities, his information respecting these islands. For while, in describing the places of Britain, more especially of its northern portion, this geographer has fallen into the grossest errors,—placing the Mull of Galloway to the north, and Cape Orcas or Dunsby Head to the east *,—in his account of Ireland, on the contrary, situated as she then was beyond the bounds of the Roman empire, and hardly known within that circle to exist, he has shown considerable accuracy, not only with respect to the shores and promontories of the island, but in most of his details of the interior of the country, its various cities and tribes, lakes, rivers, and boundaries. It is worthy of remark, too, that while of the towns and places of Britain he has in general given but the new Roman names, those of Ireland still bear on his map their old Celtic titles †: the city Hybernis still tells a tale of far distant times, and the Sacred Promontory, now known by the name of Carnsore Point, transports our imagination back to the old Phœnician days.‡ When it is con-

* "By an error in the geographical or astronomical observations preserved by Ptolemy, the latitudes north of this point (the Novantum Chersonesus, or Rens of Galloway) appear to have been mistaken for the longitudes, and consequently this part of Britain is thrown to the east."—*Notes on Richard of Cirencester.*

† "Ireland plainly preserves, in her topography, a much greater proportion of Celtic names than the map of any other country."—*Chalmers's Caledonia*, vol. i. book i. chap. 1.

‡ "In the remote ages of Phœnician commerce, all the western and south-

sidered that Ptolemy, or rather Marinus of Tyre, the writer whose steps he implicitly followed, is believed to have founded his geographical descriptions and maps on an ancient Tyrian Atlas*, this want of aboriginal names for the cities and places of Britain, and their predominance in the map of Ireland, prove how much more anciently and intimately the latter island must have been known to the geographers of Tyre than the former.

But even this proof of her earlier intercourse with that people and their colonies, and her proportionate advance in the career of civilisation, is hardly more strong than the remarkable testimony, to the same effect, of Tacitus, by whom it is declared that, at the time when he wrote, "the waters and harbours of Ireland were better known, through the resort of commerce and navigators, than those of Britain."† From this it appears that, though scarce heard of, till within a short period, by the Romans, and almost as strange to the Greeks, this sequestered island was yet in possession of channels of intercourse distinct from either; and that, while the Bri-

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western promontories of Europe were consecrated by the erection of pillars or temples, and by religious names of Celtic and primæval antiquity: this is expressly stated by Strabo. These sacred headlands multiplied in proportion as new discoveries were made along the coasts."—*Letters of Columbanus, by O'Connor*, Letter Third. The learned writer adds in a note:—"The Sacrum Promontorium, or south-western headland of Iberia Antiqua, was Cape St. Vincent. That of Ireland was Carne-soir point, as stated by Ptolemy." This headland of Carnsore would be the first to meet the eyes of the Phœnician navigators in their way from Cornwall to Ireland.

* It has been shown by Bremer (*De Fontibus Geographorum Ptolemæi, &c.*), a writer quoted by Heeren, "that Ptolemy's work itself, as well as the accompanying charts, usually attributed to a certain Agathodæmon, who lived at Alexandria in the fifth century, were, in reality, derived from Phœnician or Tyrian sources;—in other words, that Ptolemy, or, more properly speaking, Marinus of Tyre, who lived but a short time before him, and whose work he only corrected, must have founded his geographical descriptions and maps on an ancient Tyrian Atlas."—See *Heeren's Historical Researches*, vol. iii. Append. C.

† "Melius aditus portusque, per commercia et negociatores, cogniti."—*Tacit. Agricol.* c. 24. An attempt has been made, by some of the commentators, to deprive Ireland of most of the advantages of this testimony, by the suggestion of a new and barbarous reading, which transfers the word "melius" to the preceding sentence, and is not less unjust to the elegant Latinity of the historian, than to the ancient claims of the country of which he treats. It is, however, gratifying to observe that, in spite of this effort, the old reading in general maintains its ground; though, with a feeling but too characteristic of a certain class of Irishmen, Arthur Murphy has, in his translation, adopted the new one.

tons, shut out from the Continent by their Roman masters, saw themselves deprived of all that profitable intercourse which they had long maintained with the Veneti, and other people of Gaul, Ireland still continued to cultivate her old relations with Spain, and saw her barks venturing on their accustomed course, between the Celtic Cape and the Sacred Promontory, as they had done for centuries before.

Combining these proofs of an early intercourse between Ireland and the Phœnician Spaniards, with the title of Sacred bestowed on this island in far distant times, it can hardly be doubted, that her pre-eminence in religion was the chief source of this distinction; and that she was, in all probability, the chosen depository of the Phœnician worship in these seas. By the epithet Sacred, applied to a people among the ancients, it was always understood that there belonged to them some religious or sacerdotal character. In this sense it was, that the Argippæi, mentioned by Herodotus *, were called a Holy People; and the claim of Ireland to such a designation was doubtless of the same venerable kind. It has been conjectured, not without strong grounds of probability, that it was a part of the policy of the Phœnician priesthood to send out missions to their distant colonies, on much the same plan as that of the Jesuits at Paraguay, for the purpose of extending their spiritual power over those regions of which their merchants had possessed themselves †; and it is by no means unlikely, that the title of Sacred, bestowed thus early upon Ireland, may have arisen from her having been chosen as the chief seat of such a mission.

The fact, that there existed an island devoted to religious rites in these regions, has been intimated by

* Lib. iii.

† "I believe it will be found that many of their regular priests, the Magi, or Gours, did (as the regulars of modern times and religions have done) settle missions amongst the nations in those most distant parts." — *Wise's Enquiries concerning the First Inhabitants, Language, &c. of Europe.* Sir Isaac Newton, too, as quoted by Pownall, says, "With these Phœnicians came a sort of men skilled in religious mysteries."

almost all the Greek writers who have treated of them; and the position, in every instance, assigned to it, answers perfectly to that of Ireland. By Plutarch * it is stated, that an envoy despatched by the emperor Claudius to explore the British Isles, found, on an island, in the neighbourhood of Britain, an order of Magi accounted holy by the people: and, in another work of the same writer †, some fabulous wonders are related of an island lying to the west of Britain, the inhabitants of which were a holy race; while, at the same time, a connection between them and Carthage is indistinctly intimated. Diodorus Siculus also gives an account, on the authority of some ancient writers, of an island ‡ situated, as he says, "over against Gaul;" and which, from its position and size, the rites of sun-worship practised by its people, their Round Temple, their study of the heavens, and the skill of their musicians on the harp, might sufficiently warrant the assumption that Ireland was the island so characterised, did not the too fanciful colouring of the whole description rather disqualify it for the purposes of sober testimony, and incline us to rank this Hyperborean island of the historian along with his Isle of Panchæa and other such fabulous marvels. At the same time, nothing is more probable, than that the vague, glimmering knowledge which the Greeks caught up occasionally from Phœnician mer-

* In Numâ.

† De Fac. in Orb. Lunæ. "Marcellus, who wrote a history of Ethiopian affairs, says, that such and so great an island (the Atalantis) once existed, is evinced by those who composed histories of things relative to the external sea. For they relate that, in those times, there were seven islands in the Atlantic Sea sacred to Proserpine."—*Proclus on the Timæus*, quoted in *Clarke's Maritime Discoveries*.

See, for the traditions in India respecting the White Island of the West, Asiatic Transactions, vol. ii. "Hiran'ya and Su-varn'eya (says Major Wilford) are obviously the same with Erin and Juvernia, or Ireland. Another name for it is Surya-Dwipa, or the Island of the Sun, and it is probably the old Garden of Phœbus of the western mythologists."—*Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West.*

‡ This island has been claimed on the part of several countries. The editor of Diodorus, in a short note on his Index, suggests that it may have been meant for Britain:—"Videnum de Anglia intelligi queat." Rowland insists it can be no other than his own Isle of Anglesea; while Toland fixes its site in the Western Isles of Scotland; and the great Swedish scholar, Rudbeck, places it boldly in the peninsula of Scandinavia.

chants, respecting the sun-worship and science of the Sacred Island, Ierne, should have furnished the writers referred to by Diodorus with the ground-work of this fanciful tale. The size attributed to the island, which is described as "not less than Sicily," is, among the many coincidences with Ireland, not the least striking; and, with respect to its position and name, we find, that so late as the time of the poet Claudian, the Scoti or Irish were represented as in the immediate neighbourhood of the Hyperborean seas.*

But the fragment of antiquity the most valuable for the light it throws upon this point, is that extracted from an ancient geographer, by Strabo, in which we are told of an island near Britain, where sacrifices were offered to Ceres and Proserpine, in the same manner as at Samothrace.† From time immemorial, the small isle of Samothrace, in the Ægean, was a favourite seat of idolatrous worship and resort; and on its shores the Cabiric Mysteries had been established by the Phœnicians. These rites were dedicated to the deities who presided over navigation ‡; and it was usual for mariners to stop at this island on their way to distant seas, and offer up a prayer at its shrines for propitious winds and skies. From the words of the geographer quoted by Strabo, combined with all the other evidence adduced, it may be inferred that Ireland had become the Samothrace, as it were, of the western seas; that thither the ancient

* Scotumque vago mucrone secutus
Fregit Hyperboreas remis audacibus undas.
De III. Cons. Honor. v. 55.

Marcianus Heracleota, too, describes Hibernia as bounded on the north by the Hyperborean Sea.

† Φησιν ειναι νησον προς τη Βριττανικη, καθ' ην ομοια τοις εν Σαμοθρακη περι την Δημητραν και την Κορην ιερουργειται, lib. iv.

‡ "L'île de Samothrace acquit une grande célébrité chez toutes les nations maritimes, par la réputation qu'elle avoit d'être consacrées spécialement aux Divinités tutélaires des navigateurs. On alloit y prier les Dieux d'accorder des vents favorables, et solliciter des apparitions ou Epiphanies des Dioscurés."—*Dupuis, Orig. de tous les Cultes*, tom. iv. première partie. See, for the appearance of these twin stars, or fires, to Orpheus and his Argonautic companions at Samothrace, Diodorus, lib. 4. In some of the old Irish traditions, those African sea-rovers, called Fomorians, who are said to have visited these shores in ancient times, are represented as worshipping certain stars, which had "derived a power from the God of the Sea."—See *Keating*, p. 87.

Cabiric gods had been wafted by the early colonisers of that region*; and that, as the mariner used on his departure from the Mediterranean to breathe a prayer in the Sacred Island of the East, so in the seas beyond the Pillars, he found another Sacred Island, where to the same tutelary deities of the deep his vows and thanks were offered on his safe arrival.

In addition to all this confluence of evidence from high authentic sources, we have likewise the traditions of Ireland herself, — pointing invariably in the same eastern direction, — her monuments, the names of her promontories and hills, her old usages and rites, all bearing indelibly the same oriental stamp. In speaking of traditions, I mean not the fables which may in later times have been grafted upon them; but those old, popular remembrances, transmitted from age to age, which, in all countries, furnish a track for the first footsteps of history, when cleared of those idle weeds of fiction by which in time they become overgrown.

According to Strabo, it was chiefly from Gades that the Phœnicians fitted out their expeditions to the British Isles; but the traditions of the Irish look to Gallicia as the quarter from whence their colonies sailed, and vestiges of intercourse between that part of Spain and Ireland may be traced far into past times. The traditionary history of the latter country gives an account of an ancient Pharos, or light-house, erected in the neighbourhood of the port now called Corunna, for the use of navigators on their passage between that coast and Ireland†; and the names of the tribes marked by Ptolemy,

* "That the Atlantian, or Cabiric, superstition prevailed in Ireland, there cannot be a doubt." — *Rev. G. L. Faber, On the Cabiric Mysteries*, vol. ii.

† There is a remarkable coincidence between this tradition and an account given by Æthicus, the cosmographer, of a lofty Pharos, or light-house, standing formerly on the sea-coast of Gallicia, and serving as a beacon in the direction of Britain: — "Secundus angulus intendit, ubi Brigantia Civitas sita est Gallicíæ, et altissimum Pharum, et inter pauca memorandi operis ad speculam Britanniæ." Whether the translation I have given of the last three words of this passage convey their real meaning, I know not; but they have been hitherto pronounced unintelligible. The passage is thus noticed by Casaubon, in a note on Strabo, lib. 3.: — "Æthicus in Hispaniæ descriptione altissimi cujusdam Fari meminit."

as inhabiting those parts of the Irish coast facing Gallicia, prove that there was a large infusion of Spanish population from that quarter.

So irresistible, indeed, is the force of tradition, in favour of a Spanish colonisation, that every new propounder of an hypothesis on the subject is forced to admit this event as part of his scheme. Thus, Buchanan, in supposing colonies to have passed from Gaul to Ireland, contrives to carry them first to the west of Spain *; and the learned Welsh antiquary, Lhuyd, who traces the origin of the Irish to two distinct sources, admits one of those primitive sources to have been Spanish.† In the same manner, a late writer ‡, who, on account of the remarkable similarity which exists between his country's Round Towers and the Pillar-temples of Mazanderan, deduces the origin of the Irish nation from the banks of the Caspian, yields so far to the current of ancient tradition, as, in conducting his colony from Iran to the West, to give it Spain for a resting-place. Even Innes §, one of the most acute of those writers who have combated the Milesian preten-

* The opinion of Buchanan on the point will be found worthy of attention. "It is," he says, "an unvarying tradition, and with many marks of truth to confirm it, that a multitude of Spaniards, whether driven from their homes by the more powerful among their fellow countrymen, or, on account of the increase of population, emigrating of themselves, did pass over into Ireland, and take possession of the place neighbouring to that island." He adds further: "It is not probable that the Spaniards, leaving Ireland at their backs, — a country nearer to them, and of a milder temperature, — should have landed first in Albyn; but rather that, first making their descent on Hibernia, they should afterwards have sent colonies to Britain."— Lib. ii. c. 17.

† Preface to his Glossography. — In one of his letters to Mr. Rowland, Lhuyd says, in speaking of the Irish, "For, notwithstanding their histories (as those of the origin of other nations) be involved in fabulous accounts, yet that there came a Spanish colony into Ireland is very manifest." O'Brien, also, in the Preface to his Dictionary, follows the same views: — "The fact of the old Spanish language having been brought very anciently into Ireland is not the less certain, and that by a colony of the old Spaniards, who co-inhabited with the Gadelians."

‡ Popular History of Ireland, by Mr. Whitty, part i.

§ "Since the Irish tradition will absolutely have the inhabitants of that country come from Spain."— *Critical Essay*, vol. ii. dissert. i. chap. 3. A no less determined opponent of the Milesian history, though far inferior to Innes in learning and sagacity, concedes, also, on this point to traditional authority. "At the same time, still further be it from me to deny my assent to the tradition that a people, coming last from Spain, did settle here at a very early period."— *Campbell's Strictures on the Ecclesiastical and Literary History of Ireland*, sect. 4.

sions of the Irish, yet bows to the universal voice of tradition in that country, which, as he says, peremptorily declares in favour of a colonisation from Spain.

CHAP. II.

ANTIQUITY OF THE IRISH PEOPLE.

In those parts of the Spanish coasts with which the Irish were early conversant, the Phœnicians became intermixed with the original race, or Celts; and it would appear, from the mixed character of her ancient religion, that Ireland was also peopled from the same compound source.

The religion the Celts brought with them to this island, was the same, we may take for granted, with that which their kindred tribes introduced into Spain, Britain, and Gaul. That corruption of the primitive modes of adoration into which the Canaanites early lapsed, by converting into idols the rude stones and pillars set up by their fathers but as sacred memorials, and transferring to inanimate symbols of the Deity the veneration due only to himself — this most ancient superstition of which the annals of human faith bear record, is still traceable in the old traditions and monuments of Ireland. The sacred grove and well — the circle of erect stones surrounding either the altar or the judgment-seat — the unhewn pillars, adored, as symbols of the Sun, by the Phœnicians — the sacred heaps, or Carnes, dedicated to the same primitive worship — the tomb-altars, called Cromlech, supposed to have been places as well of sepulture as of sacrifice — and, lastly, those horrible rites in which children were the "burnt-offerings," which the Jewish idolaters perpetrated in a place called from

thence the Valley of Shrieking*, while, in Ireland, the scene of these frightful immolations bore the name of Magh-Sleacth, or the Place of Slaughter †,—of all these known and acknowledged features of the ancient Celtic worship, of that superstition which spread wherever the first races of men dispersed themselves, there remain, to this day, undoubted traces and testimonies, not only in the traditions and records of Ireland, but in those speaking monuments of antiquity which are still scattered over her hills and plains.

Combined with this old and primitive system of idolatry are to be found, also, a number of rites and usages belonging evidently to much later and less simple modes of worship. There may be traced, indeed, in the religious remains of the Irish, the marks of three distinct stages of superstition; namely, that first rude ritual which their Celtic progenitors brought with them from the East; next, the introduction of images somewhat approaching the human shape; and, thirdly, those monuments of a more refined system of fire-worship which still embellish this country. While some of their rites and names of deities are traceable directly to the Phœnicians, there are other religious customs which seem to have been derived, through the means of this people, from Persia.‡ It was on the whole the description of religion likely to spring up in a country into which a variety of modes of devotion and doctrine had been imported; and it is well known that the Phœnicians, with that utter indifference to diversity of worship which forms one of the most

* Jeremiah, vii. 31, 32. This valley was also named Tophet, from the practice of beating the drums, during the ceremony, to drown the cries of the children sacrificed in the fire to Moloch.

† "Magh-Sleacth, so called from an idol of the Irish, named Crom-Cruach—a stone capped with gold, about which stood twelve other rough stones. Every people that conquered Ireland (that is, every colony established in Ireland) worshipped this deity, till the arrival of St. Patrick. They sacrificed the first-born of every species to this deity; and Tighernmas Mac Follaigh, king of Ireland, commanded sacrifices to this deity on the day of Saman, and that both men and women should worship him prostrated on the ground, till they drew blood from their noses, foreheads, ears, and elbows. Many died with the severity of this worship, and hence it was called Magh-Sleacth."—*Vet. MSS.* quoted in the *Collectan. de Reb. Hibern.* No. XII.

‡ See Borlase, book ii. ch. 23. "On the Resemblance betwixt the Druids and the Persians."

striking differences between the Pagan and the Christian religionist, set no limit to the varieties of creed and ritual, with which, in their career over the globe, they furnished their colonies. Being in constant communication with Persia, for the sake of the Eastern trade, it was even a part of the commercial policy of this people to encourage an intercourse, on religious subjects, between their Eastern and Western customers, of which they themselves should be made the channel, and so convert it to their own advantage in the way of trade.

The mixed nature, indeed, of the creed of the ancient Irish seems to be intimated in their mode of designating their own priesthood, to whom they applied as well the Persian as the Celtic denomination; calling them indifferently either Magi, or Druids. Thus, those Magi described, in the Lives of St. Patrick, as warning the king against the consequences of the new faith, are, in the ancient Hymn of Fiech, on the same subject, denominated Druids.

The great object of Phœnician adoration, the Sun, was, under the same name of Baal, or Bel, the chief deity of the Irish. Even the very title of Beel-Samen, or Lord of Heaven, by which the Phœnicians, with outstretched hands, invoked their God*, was preserved in the Pagan worship of Ireland†; and the Festival of Samhin, or Heaven, the great Cabiric divinity, (honoured, under the same name, at Samothrace,) marked one of the four divisions of the Irish year. That the worship of the sun formed a part of the Pagan system which St. Patrick found established on his arrival, appears from the following passage of his Confession: — "That Sun whom we behold, rises daily, at the command of God, for our use. Yet will he never

* Τας χειρας οργειν εις τους ουρανους προς τον Ἡλιον. — *Euseb. Præparat.* lib. i. c. 7.

† Τουτον γαρ φησι Ξενον ενομιζον μονον ουρανου κυριον ΒΕΕΛΣΑΜΗΝ καλουντες, ὁ εστι παρα Φοινιξι Κυριος Ουρανου. — *Philo. Byb. ex Sanchoniath.* See Orellius on this passage, for his view of Sanchoniathon's account of the progress of idolatry, "a cultu arborum et plantarum ad solis astrorumque cultum, a Fetischismo ad Sabæismum."

reign, nor shall his splendour endure; and all those who adore him will descend wretchedly into punishment. But we believe and adore the true Sun, Christ."* Even to our own days, the names of places,—those significant memorials, by which a whole history is sometimes conveyed in a single word,—retain vestiges of the ancient superstition of the land; and such names as Knoc-greine and Tuam Greine, "Hills of the Sun," still point out the high places and cairns where, ages since, the solar rites were solemnised. It will be found, in general, that names formed from the word Grian, which, still in the Irish, as in the old Celtic language, signifies the Sun, and from which, evidently, the epithet Grynæus, applied to Apollo, was derived, mark such places as were once devoted to the solar worship. † Thus Cairne-Grainey, or the Sun's Heap, Granny's Bed, corrupted from Grian Beacht, the Sun's Circle, &c. From the same associations, a point of land, in the neighbourhood of Wexford, is called Grenor, or the Place of the Sun's Fire; and the ancient town of Granard, where there existed, in the fifth century, a sacred well of the Druids, and where also St. Patrick is said to have overturned an altar of the Sun, and erected a church in its place, was so named from being a site of the ancient Irish worship. On like grounds, the appellation of Grange is supposed to have been given to that curious cavern near Drogheda, which, from the manner of its construction, as well as from the pyramidal obelisk ‡ found in its recesses, is thought to have been consecrated, like the caves of the Mithraic worship, to the

* Nam Sol iste quem videmus Deo jubente, propter nos quotidiè oritur, sed nunquam regnabit, neque permanebit splendor ejus, sed et omnes qui adorant eum in pœnam miseri malè devenient. Nos autem credimus et adoramus Solem verum, Christum.—*S. Patricii Confessio.*

† Rer. Hibern. Scriptor. prol. 1. 54.

‡ It was to a stone, we know, of this pyramidal shape that the Phœnicians of Emesa offered up their vows, invoking it, as a symbol of the sun, by the mystic name Elagabalus.—See *Gibbon*, vol. i. ch. 6.—This stone, like most of those dedicated to the sun, was black; and it is rather remarkable that, at Stonehenge, which is supposed in general to have been a temple consecrated to the sun, the altar-stone has been lately discovered, on examination, to be black.

Sun.* Among various other monuments of solar worship through Ireland, may be noticed the remains of a cromlech, or tomb-altar, near Cloyne, which bore, originally, the name of Carig Croith, or the Sun's Rock.

Wherever the sun has been made an object of adoration, the moon has naturally shared in the worship; and, accordingly, in Ireland this luminary was adored under the sacred name of Re. While some of their mountains, too, appear to have been dedicated to the sun, we meet with Slieve-Mis, in the county of Antrim, signifying Mountains of the Moon. Those golden ornaments, in the shape of a crescent, which have been found frequently in the Irish bogs, are supposed to have been connected with this lunar worship, and to have been borne by the Druids in those religious ceremonies which took place on the first quarter of the moon's age.†

The worship of fire, once common to all the religions of the world, constituted also a part of the old Irish superstitions; and the Inextinguishable Fire of St. Bridget was but a transfer to Christian shrines and votaries of a rite connected, through long ages, with the religious feelings of the people. Annually, at the time of the vernal equinox, the great festival of La Baal-tinne, or the Day of the Baal-Fire, was celebrated‡; and through

* "The monument at the New Grange exactly points out to us the manner in which the Mithratic cavern is connected with the Mithratic pyramid." — "The narrow passage, in fact, and the stone bowls of this Irish grotto are merely the counterpart of those in the cave of Trophonius, the pagodas of Hindostan, and the pyramids of Egypt."—*Faber, on the Cabiric Mysteries*, vol. ii. The reverend writer adds, that "the island of Ogygia, which Plutarch affirms to lie due west of Britain, must certainly be Ireland, and no other."

† See for a description of these crescents, Collectan. No. XIII. Gough's Camden, vol. iii.—A bas-relief, found at Autun, of which there is an engraving given by Montfaucon, represents a Gallic Druid holding in his right hand a crescent resembling the moon at six days old; "which," adds Montfaucon, "agrees so exactly with that religious care of the Druids not to celebrate the ceremony of the mistletoe except on the sixth day of the moon, that I think it cannot be doubted but that this crescent, which is of the size of the moon at that age, respects that rite of the Druids."—*Antiq. Explig.* vol. ii. part ii. book v.

‡ To this day, the annual rent which the farmers pay to their landlords, in the month of May, is called by them Cios-na-Bealtinne, or the rent of Baal's fire.

every district of Ireland it was strictly ordered that, on that night, all fires should be extinguished; nor were any, under pain of death, to be again lighted till the pile of sacrifices in the palace of Tara was kindled. Among the Persians the same ceremony, according to Hyde, still prevails: after their festival of the 24th of April, the domestic fires are every where extinguished, nor would any good believer rekindle them but by a taper lighted at the dwelling of the priest.* A similar relic of Oriental paganism exists also in Jerusalem, where, annually, at the time of Easter, a sacred fire is supposed to descend into the Holy Sepulchre, and of the tapers lighted at its flame a considerable traffic is made by the priests. To this day, the custom of making bonfires on the first night of May prevails throughout Ireland;—the change of the period of the festival from the vernal equinox to the commencement of May having been made soon after the introduction of Christianity, in order to guard against its interference with the holy season of Lent.

With the worship of fire, that of water was usually joined by the Gentiles; and we find, in like manner, particular fountains and wells were held sacred among the Irish. Even that heresy, or, at least, variety of opinion, which is known to have prevailed among the Easterns on this subject, existed also in Ireland; as we are told, in the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick, of a certain Magus, or Druid, who regarded water alone as an object of reverence, considering fire to be an evil genius.† Hence, by his own wish, it is added, he was buried under a stone in a certain well, in Mayo, which had been long venerated by the people under the name

* See account of this ceremony, from Chardin, in Dupuis, Origine des Cultes, tom. v. 169. "Tout le peuple crédule achète aussitôt de ces bougies." This mode of increasing their income, says Hyde, is resorted to by them in addition to their tithes:—"Præter decimas excogitarunt alium sacerdotalem reditum augendi modum."

† L. 2. c. 20.—"This reminds us of the old Oriental contests between the worshippers of fire and those of water, and leads to a conclusion that some connection had existed between Ireland and remote parts of the East."—*Lanigan, Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. i. chap. 5.

of the King of the Waters. In another history of St. Patrick it is mentioned, as the motive of this holy man for visiting Slane, that he had heard of a fountain there which the Magi honoured, and made offerings to it, as to a god.* Even in our own times, the Irish are described, by one well versed in their antiquities †, as being in the habit of visiting fountains, or wells, more particularly such as are in the neighbourhood of an old blasted oak, or an upright unhewn stone, and hanging rags upon the branches of the trees. When asked their reason for this practice, the answer of the oldest among them is generally, we are told, to the effect that their ancestors did the same, and that it was designed as a preventive against the sorceries of the Druids. There is scarcely a people throughout the East, amongw hom this primitive practice, of hanging pieces torn from their garments upon the branches of particular trees, has not been found to prevail. The wild-olive of Africa ‡, and the Sacred Tree of the Hindus §, bear usually strung upon them this simple sort of offering; and more than one observant traveller in the East has been reminded, by this singular custom, of Ireland.

There are, however, some far less innocent coincidences to be remarked between the Irish and Eastern creeds. It is, indeed, but too certain, that the sacrifice of human victims formed a part of the Pagan worship in Ireland, as it did in every country where the solar god, Baal, was adored. On the eve of the Feast of Samhin, all those whom, in the month of March preceding, the Druids had, from their tribunal

* Sir W. Betham's Irish Antiquarian Researches, Append. 29.

† Letters of Columbanus, by Dr. O'Connor, let. iii.

‡ The Argali. — *Travels in Europe and Africa*, by Colonel Keatinge. "A traveller," observes this writer, "will see precisely the like in the west of Ireland." Mungo Park, too, speaks of the large tree called Neema Tooba, "decorated with innumerable rags and scraps of cloth," and which "nobody now presumed to pass without hanging up something."

§ See Sir William Ouseley's interesting Travels through Persia, vol. ii. Append. No. 9. — Among the trees thus decorated, seen by sir William in the vale of Abdui, and elsewhere, he mentions one in the neighbourhood of a stone pillar; bringing to his recollection, he says, various remains which he had seen in Wales and Ireland.

on Mount Usneach, condemned to death, were, in pursuance of this solemn sentence, burned between two fires. * In general, however, as regarded both human creatures and brutes, the ceremony of passing them between two fires appears to have been intended not to affect life, but merely as a mode of periodical purification.† Thus, in an old account of the Irish rites, it is said, "The Druids lighted up two blazing fires, and having performed incantations over them, compelled the herds of cattle to pass through them, according to a yearly custom." But it cannot be denied that, to a late period, some of the most horrible features of the old Canaanite superstition continued to darken and disgrace the annals of the Irish; for, like the Israelite idolaters, not only did they "burn incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree," but also the denounced crime of Manasseh and Ahaz, in "causing their children to pass through the fire," was but too faithfully acted over again in Pagan Ireland. A plain, situated in the district at present called the county of Leitrim, to which they gave the name of Magh-Sleacth, or Field of Slaughter, was the great scene, as already has been stated, of these horrors of primæval superstition; for there, on the night of Samhin, the same dreadful

* From an old Irish manuscript in the possession of the learned antiquary, Lhuyd, cited by Dr. O'Connor. See also O'Brien's Irish Dictionary, *Bealtinne*, where, however, the translation is somewhat different from that of Dr. O'Connor.

† The superstition of purifying between two fires appears to have been as universal as it was ancient. "Les adorateurs de feu, dit Maimonide (lib. iii. c. 38.), publièrent qui ceux qui ne feraient point passer leurs enfans par le feu, les exposoient au danger de mourir."—*Dupuis*, tom. iii. p. 740. "The narrative of an embassy from Justin to the Khákàn, or emperor, who then resided in a fine vale near the Irtish, mentions the Tartarian custom of purifying the Roman ambassadors by conducting them between 'two fires.'"—*Sir W. Jones, Fifth Discourse, on the Tartars.* "The more ignorant Irish," says Ledwich, "still drive their cattle through these fires as an effectual means of preserving them from future accidents;" and Martin tells us that the natives of the Western Isles of Scotland, which are known to have been peopled from Ireland, "when they would describe a man as being in a great strait, or difficulty, say that he is between two fires of Bel." The same superstitious practice was observed at the festival of the goddess Pales, at Rome. "Per flammas saluisse pecus, saluisse colonos."—*Ovid. Fast.* lib. iv. Of this old Roman ceremony, Niebuhr thus speaks:—"The Festival of Pales, the 21st, when the country people and the earliest inhabitants of Rome used to purify themselves by passing through a strong fire, as our ancestors used to kindle fires on May-day."

tribute which the Carthaginians are known to have paid to Saturn, in sacrificing to him their first-born children*, was by the Irish offered up to their chief idol, Crom-Cruach. † This frightful image, whose head was of gold, stood surrounded by twelve lesser idols, representing, it is most probable, the signs of the zodiac; — the connection of sun-worship with astronomy having been, in all countries, a natural consequence of that creed, insomuch that science, no less than poetry, may be said to have profited largely by superstition.

How far those pillar-temples, or Round Towers, which form so remarkable a part of Ireland's antiquities, and whose history is lost in the night of time, may have had any connection with the Pyrolatry, or Fire-worship, of the early Irish, we have no certain means of determining. That they were looked upon as very ancient, in the time of Giraldus, appears from the tale told by him of the fishermen of Lough Neagh pointing to strangers, as they sailed over that lake, the tall, narrow, ecclesiastical round towers under the water ‡, supposed to have been sunk there from the time of the inundation by which the lake was formed. This great event, — the truth or falsehood of which makes no difference in the fact of the period assigned to it, — is by the annalist Tigernach referred to the year of Christ 62; thus removing the date of these structures to far too remote a period to admit of their being considered as the work of Christian hands.

The notion, that they were erected by the Danes§, is

* Diodor. Sicul. lib. 20.

† Dinseanchus, MS., quoted Rer. Hibernic. Script. prol. 1. 22. This image was destroyed by St. Patrick. — "In commemoration," says O'Flaherty, "of this memorable annihilation of idolatry, I believe, the last Sunday in summer is, by a solemn custom, dedicated throughout Ireland, and commonly called Domnach Cromcruach, that is, the Sunday of Black Crom; I suppose on account of the horrid and deformed appearance of this diabolical spectre." — *Ogygia*, part iii. ch. xxii. "Cromcruach," says Keating, "was the same god that Zoroaster worshipped in Greece." To this one flighty assertion of Keating may be traced the origin, perhaps, of all those wild notions and fancies which Vallancey afterwards promulgated.

‡ "Piscatores Turres istas, quæ, more patriæ, arctæ sunt et altæ, necnon et rotundæ, sub undis manifeste, sereno tempore, conspiciunt." — *Girald. Cambrens.* Dist. II. c. 9.

§ The chief supporters of this opinion, as well as of the notion that these

unsupported even by any plausible grounds. In the time of Giraldus, the history of the exploits of these invaders was yet recent; and had there been any tradition, however vague, that they were the builders of these towers, the Welsh slanderer would not have been slow to rob Ireland of the honour. But, on the contrary, Giraldus expressly informs us that they were built "in the manner peculiar to the country." Had they been the work of Danes, there would assuredly have been found traces of similar edifices, either in their own Scandinavian regions, or in the other countries of Europe which they occupied. But not a vestige of any such buildings has been discovered, nor any tradition relating to them; and while, in Ireland, Round Towers, or the remains of them, are found in places which the Danes never possessed, in some of the principal seats of these people, such as Waterford and Wexford, no building of the kind has been ever known to exist.

In despair of being able to ascertain at what period, and by whom, they were constructed, our antiquaries are reduced to the task of conjecturing the purposes of their construction. That they may have been appropriated to religious uses in the early ages of the church, appears highly probable from the policy adopted by the first Christians in all countries, of enlisting in the service of the new faith the religious habits and associations of the old. It is possible, therefore, that they might, at some period, have been used as stations for pilgrims; for to this day, it appears, the prayers said at such stations are called Turrish prayers.* An-

towers were intended for belfries, are Molyneux (Natural History of Ireland, Discourse concerning the Danish Mounts, &c.), and Dr. Ledwich, in his Antiquities. As an instance of the vitality of a misrepresentation, it may be noticed that Lynch, the author of the Defence of Ireland against Giraldus, was the first who mentioned, and only upon hearsay, that the Danes were the builders of the Round Towers,—"primi erexisse *dicuntur*." The Franciscan, Walsh, professing to copy Lynch, converts into certainty what Lynch gave but as a report; and on this authority, so misrepresented, the learned Molyneux, and others, found their conclusions. See, on this subject, Dr. Lanigan, chap. 32.

* "A pilgrimage is called Turrish in Irish, and prayers said by pilgrims at stations are called Turrish prayers; a term peculiar to this country, and

other of the notions concerning them is, that they were places of confinement for penitents. But, besides the absurdity of the supposition, that a people, whose churches were all constructed of wood and wicker, should have raised such elaborate stone towers for the confinement of their penitents, we have means of knowing the penitential discipline of the early Christian Irish, and in no part of it is such a penance as that of imprisonment in a Round Tower enjoined. The opinion of Harris, that they were intended, like the pillars of the Eastern Stylites, for the habitation of solitary anchorets *, is in so far, perhaps, deserving of notice, as showing how naturally the eye turns to the East, in any question respecting the origin of Irish antiquities. It is pretended that the models of these *Inclusorii*, — as, according to this hypothesis, the towers are supposed to have been, — were brought from the East by some of those Irish monks who are known to have visited the places of the Holy Land. But of any such Oriental importation, at that period, there exists no record whatever; and Adamnan, an Irish writer of the seventh century, who, in a work taken down by him from the lips of a French traveller to the East, gives an account of the Tombs of the Patriarchs and other holy wonders, makes no mention of the abodes of these Pillar Saints, nor of the models which they are alleged to have furnished for his country's Round Towers. It may be mentioned, too, as one of the points in which the resemblance here assumed is wanting, that Simon Stylites, and his fanatical imitators, lived *upon*, not *within*, their high columns.

To the notion that our Irish structures were intended for watch-towers or beacons, there are the most con-

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perhaps allusive to these towers." — *William Tighe, Survey of the Co. of Kilkenny.*

* "This opinion seems to have been first proposed by a Dean Richardson, of Belturbet, from whom it was taken by Harris, who has endeavoured to make it appear probable."—*Lanigan, Ecclesiast. Hist.* chap. 32. The same opinion was adopted also by Doctor Milner.—*Letters from Ireland, Let.* 14.

clusive objections ;—their situations being frequently on low grounds, where they are overlooked by natural elevations *, and the apertures at their summit not being sufficiently large to transmit any considerable body of light. Their use occasionally as belfries may be concluded from the term, Clocteach, applied to some of them ; but, besides that their form and dimensions would not admit of the swing of a moderately sized bell, the very circumstance of the door or entrance being usually from eight or ten to sixteen feet above the ground, proves them to have been in no degree more fitted or intended for belfries, than for any of the other various modern uses assigned to them.

In the ornaments of one or two of these towers, there are evident features of a more modern style of architecture, which prove them to have been added to the original structure in later times ; and the same remark applies to the crucifix and other Christian emblems, which are remarked on the tower at Swords, and also on that of Donoughmore.† The figures of the Virgin and St. John, on one of the two Round Towers of Scotland, must have been, likewise, of course, a later addition ; unless, as seems likely from the description of the arches in which these figures are contained, the structure itself is entirely of recent date, and, like the tower of Kineth, in Ireland, a comparatively modern imitation of the old Pagan pattern.

As the worship of fire is known, unquestionably, to have formed a part of the ancient religion of the country, the notion that these towers were originally fire-temples, appears the most probable of any that have yet been suggested. To this it is objected, that inclosed structures are wholly at variance with that great principle of the Celtic religion, which considers it derogatory to divine natures to confine their worship

* In the deep and secluded valley of Glendalough stands one of the most interesting, from its romantic position, of all these Round Towers.

† A print of this tower at Swords, with a crucifix on the top, may be seen at the end of Molyneux's work.

within the limits of walls and roofs; — the refined principle upon which the Magi incited Xerxes to burn the temples of the Greeks. It appears certain, however, that, at a later period, the use of fire-temples was adopted by the Persians themselves; though, at the same time, they did not the less continue to offer their sacrifices upon the hills and in the open air, employing the Pyreia introduced by Zoroaster, as mere repositories of the sacred fire.* A simple altar, with a brazier burning upon it, was all that the temple contained, and at this they kindled the fire for their worship on the high places. To this day, as modern writers concerning the Parsees inform us, the part of the temple called the Place of Fire, is accessible only to the priests †; and on the supposition that our towers were, in like manner, temples in which the sacred flame was kept safe from pollution, the singular circumstance of the entrance to them being rendered so difficult by its great height from the ground is at once satisfactorily explained.

But there is yet a far more striking corroboration of this view of the origin of the Round Towers. While in no part of Continental Europe has any building of a similar construction been discovered, there have been found, near Bhaugulpore, in Hindostan, two towers, which bear an exact resemblance to those of Ireland. In all the peculiarities of their shape ‡, — the door or entrance, elevated some feet above the ground, — the four

* "Cependant, tous les auteurs, Arabes et Persans, cités par M. Hyde et M. D'Herbelot, attribuent à Zerdusht l'établissement des Pyrées."—*Foucher, Mémoires de l'Acad.* tom. xxix. M. Foucher has shown, that the two apparently inconsistent systems,—that of Zoroaster, which introduced fire-temples, and the old primitive mode of worshipping in the open air,—both existed together. "Pour lever cette contradiction apparente, il suffit d'observer que les Pyrées n'étoient pas des temples proprement dits, mais de simples oratoires, d'où l'on tiroit le feu pour sacrifier sur les montagnes."

† Anquetil du Perron, Zend Avesta, tom. ii.

‡ Voyages and Travels, by Lord Valentia, vol. ii.—"I was much pleased," says his lordship, "with the sight of two very singular Round Towers, about a mile north-west of the town. They much resemble those buildings in Ireland, which have hitherto puzzled the antiquaries of the sister kingdoms, excepting that they are more ornamented. It is singular that there is no tradition concerning them, nor are they held in any respect by the Hindoos. The Rajah of Jyanegur considers them as holy, and has erected a small building to shelter the great number of his subjects who annually come to worship here."

windows near the top, facing the cardinal points, and the small rounded roof, — these Indian temples are, to judge by the description of them, exactly similar to the Round Towers; and, like them also, are thought to have belonged to a form of worship now extinct and even forgotten. One of the objections brought against the notion of the Irish Towers having been fire-temples, namely, that it was not necessary for such a purpose to raise them to so great a height*, is abundantly answered by the description given of some of the Pyrea, or fire-temples of the Guebres. Of these, some, we are told, were raised to so high a point as near 120 feet †, the height of the tallest of the Irish towers; and an intelligent traveller, in describing the remains of one seen by him near Bagdad, says, "the annexed sketch will show the resemblance this pillar bears to those ancient columns so common in Ireland." ‡

On the strength of the remarkable resemblance alleged to exist between the pillar-temples near Bhaugulpore and the Round Towers of Ireland, a late ingenious historian does not hesitate to derive the origin of the Irish people from that region; and that an infusion, at least, of population from that quarter might, at some remote period, have taken place, appears by no means an extravagant supposition. The opinion, that Iran and the western parts of Asia were originally the centre from whence population diffused itself to all the regions of the world, seems to be confirmed by the traditional histories of most nations, as well as by the results both of philological and antiquarian enquiries. To the tribes dispersed after the Trojan war, it has been the pride equally both of Celtic and of Teutonic nations to trace back their origin. The Saxon Chronicle derives the earliest inhabitants of Britain from Armenia; and the

* Dr. Milner, Tour in Ireland, letter xiv. "The tower at Kildare is calculated to be four feet loftier than the pillar of Trajan at Rome."—*D'Alton.*

† "These edifices are rotundas, of about thirty feet in diameter, and raised in height to a point near 120 feet."—*Hanway's Travels into Persia*, vol. i. part iii. chap. 43.

‡ Hon. Major Keppel's Personal Narrative, vol i. chap. 7.

great legislator of the Scandinavians, Odin, is said to have come, with his followers, from the neighbourhood of the Euxine Sea. By those who hold that the Celts and Persians were originally the same people*, the features of affinity so strongly observable between the Pagan Irish and the Persians will be accounted for without any difficulty. But, independently of this hypothesis, the early and long-continued intercourse which Ireland appears to have maintained, through the Phœnicians, with the East, would sufficiently explain the varieties of worship which were imported to her shores, and which became either incorporated with her original creed, or formed new and distinct rallying points of belief. In this manner the adoration of shaped idols was introduced; displacing, in many parts — as we have seen, in the instance of the idol Crom-Cruach — that earliest form of superstition which confined its worship to rude erect stones. To the same later ritual belonged also those images of which some fragments have been found in Ireland, described† as of black wood, covered and plated with thin gold, and the chased work on them in lines radiated from a centre, as is usual in the images of the sun. There was also another of these later objects‡ of adoration, called Kerman

* Cluverius, Keysler, Pelloutier, and others. "A l'égard des Perses," says Pelloutier, "ils étoient certainement le même peuple que les Celtes."

† By Governor Pownall, in his account of these and other curious Irish remains to the Society of Antiquaries, 1774. In speaking of one of the images, which he supposes to have been a symbolic image of Mithra, he remarks, that the Gaditanians used such radiated figures, and adds, "from the known and confirmed intercourse of this Phœnician or Carthaginian colony with Ireland, all difficulty as to this symbolic form ceases." Pursuing the view that naturally suggests itself on the subject, the learned antiquary adds, "Whatever the image was, I must refer it to the later line of theology rather than to the Celtic Druidic theology of the more ancient Irish. To the colonies, or rather to the settlements and factories of the later people of Carthage and Gades, and not to the original Phœnicians, I refer those several things heretofore and hereinafter described."

‡ To a still later mythology belongs the belief of the Irish in a sort of Genii or Fairies, called *Sidhe*, supposed to inhabit pleasant hills. *Lanigan*, vol. i. chap. 5. In the same class with the Sidhe, Vallancey places the Ban-sidhe, or Banshee, — "a young demon," as he explains it, "supposed to attend each family, and to give notice of the death of a relation to persons at a distance."— *Vindic. of Anc. Hist.* There were also the Suire, or Nymphs of the Sea, claimed by Vallancey as the Deæ Syriæ; and described by Keating, as playing around the ships of the Milesian heroes during their passage to Ireland.

Kelstach*, the favourite idol of the Ultonians, which had for its pedestal, as some say, the golden stone of Clogher, and in which, to judge by the description of it, there were about the same rudiments of shape as in the first Grecian Hermæ.† Through the same channel which introduced these and similar innovations, it is by no means improbable that, at a still later period, the pillar-temples of the Eastern fire-worship might have become known; and that even from the shores of the Caspian a colony of Guebres might have found their way to Ireland, and there left, as enigmas to posterity, those remarkable monuments to which only the corresponding remains of their own original country can now afford any clue.

The connection of sun-worship with the science of astronomy has already been briefly adverted to; and the four windows, facing the four cardinal points, which are found in the Irish as well as in the Eastern pillar-temples, were alike intended, no doubt, for the purposes of astronomical observation,—for determining the equinoctial and solstitial times, and thereby regulating the recurrence of religious festivals. The Phœnicians themselves constructed their buildings on the same principle; and, in the temple of Tyre, where stood the two famous columns dedicated to the Wind and to Fire, there were also pedestals, we are told, whose four sides, facing the cardinal points, bore sculptured upon them the four figures of the zodiac, by which the position of those points in the heavens is marked.‡ With a similar view to astronomical uses and purposes the Irish Round Towers were no doubt constructed; and a strong evidence of their having been used as observatories is, that we find them called by some of the Irish annalists Celestial Indexes. Thus in an account, given in the Annals of

* The scholia of Cathold Maguir, quoted by O'Flaherty, Ogygia, part iii. chap. 22.

† "Ηλαττεται δε και αχειρ, και ατους, και τετραγωνος, τω σχηματι δ' Ερμης."—*Phurnutus de Natur. Deor.*

‡ Joseph. Antiq. l. viii. c. 2.

the Four Masters, of a great thunder-storm at Armagh, it is said that "the city was seized by lightning to so dreadful an extent as to leave not a single hospital, nor cathedral church, nor palace, nor Celestial Index, that it did not strike with its flame." * Before this and other such casualties diminished it, the number of these towers must have been considerable. † From the language of Giraldus, it appears that they were common in his time through the country; and in thus testifying their zeal for the general object of adoration, by multiplying the temples dedicated to its honour, they but followed the example as well of the Greek as of the Persian fire-worshippers. ‡

There remain yet one or two other hypotheses, respecting the origin and purposes of these structures, to which it may be expected that I should briefly advert. By some the uses to which they were destined have been thought similar to that of the turrets in the neighbourhood of Turkish mosques, and from their summits, it is supposed, proclamation was made of new moons and approaching religious festivities. A kind of trumpet §, which has been dug up in the neighbourhood of some of these towers, having a large mouth-hole in the side, is conjectured to have been used to assist the voice in

* Annal. Ult. ad ann. 995.; also Tigernach, and the Annals of the Four Masters for the same year. Tigernach adds, that "there never happened before in Ireland, nor ever will, till the day of judgment, a similar visitation." The learned Colgan, in referring to this record of the annalists, describes the ruin as extending to the "church, belfries, and Towers of Armagh; "thus clearly distinguishing the Round Towers from the belfries.

† It is generally computed that there are now remaining fifty-six; but the Rev. Mr. Wright, in his account of Glendalough, makes the number sixty-two; and Mr. Brewer (Beauties of Ireland, Introduction), is of opinion, that "several, still remaining in obscure parts of the country, are entirely unnoticed by topographical writers."

‡ In speaking of the Prytanea which, according to Bryant, were properly towers for the preservation of the sacred fire, a learned writer says, "When we consider that before the time of Theseus, every village in Attica had its Prytaneum, we may collect how generally the fire-worship prevailed in those times."—*Dissertation upon the Athenian Skirophoria.* So late as the 10th century, when Ebn Haukal visited Pars, there was not, as he tells us, "any district of that province, or any village, without a fire-temple."

§ See a description of these trumpets in Gough's Camden, and in Collectan. de Reb. Hibern., No. 13.

these announcements to the people. Another notion respecting them is, that they were symbols of that ancient Eastern worship, of which the God Mahadeva, or Siva, was the object*; while, on the other hand, an ingenious writer, in one of the most learnedly argued, but least tenable, of all the hypotheses on the subject, contends that they were erected, in the sixth and seventh centuries, by the primitive Cœnobites and Bishops, with the aid of the newly converted Kings and Toparchs, and were intended as strong-holds, in time of war and danger, for the sacred utensils, relics, and books, belonging to those churches† in whose immediate neighbourhood they stood. To be able to invest even with plausibility so inconsistent a notion as that, in times when the churches themselves were framed rudely of wood, there could be found either the ambition or the skill to supply them with adjuncts of such elaborate workmanship‡, is, in itself, no ordinary feat of ingenuity. But the truth is, that neither then nor, I would add, at any other assignable period, within the whole range of Irish history, is such a state of things known authentically to have existed as can solve the difficulty of these towers, or account satisfactorily, at once, for the object of the buildings, and the advanced civilisation of the architects who erected them. They must, therefore, be referred to times beyond the reach of historical record. That they were destined originally to religious purposes can hardly admit of question; nor can those who have sa-

* See, for the grounds of this view, General Vallancey's imaginary coincidences between the Eocad of the Irish and the Bavani of the Hindoos; as also between the Muidhr or Sun-stone of the former, and the Mahody of the Gentoos.—*Vindication of Ancient History of Ireland*, pp. 160. 212. 506. The same notion has been followed up in Mr. O'Brien's clever, but rather too fanciful disquisition, on the subject, lately published,

† *Inquiry into the Origin and primitive Use of the Irish Pillar-Tower*, by Colonel Harvey de Montmorency Morres.

‡ Dr. Milner, a high authority on such subjects, says of these structures:—"The workmanship of them is excellent, as appears to the eye, and as is proved by their durability."—*Inquiry, &c. Letter* 14. No words, however, can convey a more lively notion of the time they have lasted and may still endure, than does the simple fact stated in the following sentence:—"In general, they are entire to this day; though many churches, near which they stood, are either in ruins or totally destroyed."—*S. Brereton, on the Round Towers, Archæolog. Lond. Soc.*

tisfied themselves, from the strong evidence which is found in the writings of antiquity, that there existed, between Ireland and some parts of the East, an early and intimate intercourse, harbour much doubt as to the real birthplace of the now unknown worship of which these towers remain the solitary and enduring monuments.

Having now devoted to the consideration of these remarkable buildings that degree of attention which their connection with the history of the country seemed to call for, I shall proceed to notice those other ancient remains with which Ireland abounds, and which, though far less peculiar and mysterious, bear even still more unquestionable testimony to the origin and high antiquity of her people. That most common of all Celtic monuments, the Cromleach*, which is to be found not only in most parts of Europe, but also in Asia†, and exhibits, in the strength and simplicity of its materials, the true character of the workmanship of antiquity, is also to be found, in various shapes and sizes, among the monuments of Ireland. Of these I shall notice only such as have attracted most the attention of our antiquaries. In the neighbourhood of Dundalk, in the county of Louth, we are told of a large Cromleach, or altar, which fell to ruin some time since, and whose site is described as being by the side of a river, "between two Druid

* So called in Irish. "It is remarkable that all the ancient altars found in Ireland, and now distinguished by the name of Cromleachs or sloping stones, were originally called *Bothal*, or the House of God, and they seem to be of the same species as those mentioned in the Book of Genesis, called by the Hebrews, *Bethel*, which has the same signification as the Irish Bothal."—*Beauford, Druidism Revived, Collect. Hibern. No.* 7.

From the word Bethel, the name Bætyli, applied to the sacred stones of the Pagans, was evidently derived. "This sort of monument," says Scaliger (in Euseb.), "though beloved by God at first, became odious to him when perverted to idolatrous purposes by the Canaanites:"—Odit eum quòd Chananæi deduxerunt illum ungendi seu consecrandi ritum in ritum idololatriæ.

† In Sir Richard Hoare's History of Wiltshire, there are representations given of two Cromleachs in Malabar, exactly similar to those of the British Isles. See also Maundrell's Travels, for an account of a monument of the same description upon the Syrian coast, "in the very region," says King, "of the Phœnicians themselves"—*Munimenta Antiqua.* King supposes this structure, described by Maundrell, to have been of nearly the very same form and kind as the cromleach, or altar, called Kit's Cotty House, in Kent.

groves."* On digging beneath the ruins, there was found a great part of the skeleton of a human figure, which bore the appearance of having been originally enclosed in an urn. There were also, mixed up with the bones, the fragments of a broken rod or wand, which was supposed to have been a part of the insignia of the person there interred, and might possibly have been that badge of the Druidical office which is still called, in Ireland, the conjuror's or Druid's wand. In the neighbourhood of this ruined Cromleach is another, called by the inhabitants "the Giant's Load," from the tradition attached to most of these monuments, that they were the works of giants in the times of old.† At Castle-Mary, near Cloyne, are seen the remains of a large Cromleach, called in Irish Carig Croith, or the Rock of the Sun,—one of those names which point so significantly to the ancient worship of the country; and, in the same county, near Glanworth, stands a monument of this kind, called Labacolly, or the Hag's Bed, of such dimensions as to form a chamber about twenty-five feet long and six feet wide.‡

Not less ancient and general, among the Celtic nations, was the circle of upright stones, with either an altar or tall pillar in the centre, and, like its prototype at Gilgal, serving sometimes as a temple of worship, sometimes as a place of national council or inauguration. That the custom of holding judicial meetings in this manner was very ancient appears from a group which we find represented upon the shield of Achilles, of a Council of Elders, seated round on a circle of polished

* *Louthiana*, book iii. The frequent discovery of human bones under these monuments favours the opinion of Wright and others, that they were, in general, erected over graves. See, for some of the grounds of this view, Wright's Remarks on Plate V., Louthiana. It is, indeed, most probable, that all the Druidical monuments, circles, cromleachs, &c. whatever other uses they may have served, were originally connected with interment

† "The native Irish tell a strange story about it, relating how the whole was brought, all at once, from the neighbouring mountains, by a giant called Parrah bough M'Shaggean, and who, they say, was buried near this place."—*Louth.*

‡ For an account of various other remains of this description in Ireland, see King's Muniment. Antiq., vol. i. pp 253, 254., &c.

stones.* The rough, unhewn stone, however, used in their circular temples by the Druids, was the true, orthodox observance† of the divine command delivered to Noah, "If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone:" for, even those nations which lapsed into idolatry still retained the first patriarchal pattern, and carried it with them in their colonising expeditions throughout the world. All monuments, therefore, which depart from the primitive observance just mentioned are to be considered as belonging to a comparatively recent date.

The ruinous remains of a circular temple, near Dundalk, formed a part, it is supposed, of a great work like that at Stonehenge, being open, as we are told, to the east, and composed of similar circles of stone within.‡ One of the old English traditions respecting Stonehenge is, that the stones were transported thither from Ireland, having been brought to the latter country by giants, from the extremities of Africa; and in the time of Giraldus Cambrensis there was still to be seen, as he tells, on the plain of Kildare, an immense monument of stones, corresponding exactly in appearance and construction with that of Stonehenge.§

The Heathen Irish, in their feeling of reverence for particular stones and rocks, but followed the example of most of the Eastern nations; and the marvellous virtue supposed to lie in the famous Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, used in the election of Irish monarchs, finds a parallel in the atizoe||, or silvery stone of the Persians, to

* ——— οἱ δὲ γεγοντες
Εἶσαν' ἐπι ξεστοισι λιθοις, ἱερῳ ἐνι κυκλῳ.—*Iliad.* xviii. 503.

For the credit of the antiquity of these stones, King chooses to translate ξεστοισι (I know not on what authority), "rough, unhewn stones."

† "It appears extremely probable, that all the Cities of Refuge, of which so much is said in the Scriptures, were temples erected in this circular manner."—*Identity of the Religions called Druidical and Hebrew.*

‡ The remains, according to Wright, of a temple or theatre. "It is enclosed on one side with a rampart, or ditch, and seems to have been a very great work, of the same kind with that of Stonehenge, in England."—*Louthiana.*

§ Unde et ibidem lapides quidam aliis simillimi similique modo erecti, usque in hodiernum conspiciuntur. Mirum qualiter tanti lapides, tot etiam, &c. &c.—*Topograph. Hibern.*, c. 18.

|| "Atizöen in India et in Perside ac Ida monte nasci tradit, argenteo ni-

which a similar charm, in the choice of their kings, used to be attributed by the Magi. Those monuments, too, known by the name of Rocking Stones, and found in Ireland as well as in Cornwall and Wales, appear in some respects to resemble that sort of natural or artificial wonders, which the Phœnicians held sacred, under the name of Bætyli, or animated stones. These they declare to have been fabricated by the god Ouranos, or Heaven*, the deity worshipped by the Samothracians, and also, under the title of Samhin, or Heaven, by the Irish. That these stones — which moved, it is said, as if stirred by a demon †, — formed a part of the idolatrous ceremonies of the East, may be concluded from the mention of them, by some ancient writers, as having been seen at that great seat of sun-worship, Heliopolis, or the ancient Balbec. In some instances it would appear that the Bætyli were, in so far, unlike the mobile monument of the Druids, that they were but small and portable stones, worn by the religious as amulets.‡ There

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tore fulgentem . . . . . necessariam Magis regem constituentibus." — *Plin.* lib. xxxvii. c. 54. See also Boethius, *de Gemmis.* In Borlase's *Antiquities of Cornwall*, the name of this stone is printed incorrectly Artizoe, and as no reference is given to the passage of Pliny where it is mentioned, the word has been taken on trust from Borlase by all succeeding writers. Among others, General Vallancey has amusingly founded on the typographical error one of his ever ready etymologies. "Now, *Art* in Irish signifying a stone as well as *Cloch*, the name of this stone of ointment, viz. *Artdusaca*, may have been corrupted by Pliny into Artizoe of the Persians."—*Vindic. Ancient Hist. of Ireland*, chap. ii. sect. 2.

* Ετι δε εστενοησε Θεος Ουρανος βαιτυλια λιθους εμψυχους μηχανησαμενος.—*Philo Bybl.* Stukeley, in his zeal to claim for the Druids some knowledge of the magnetic needle, supposes these moving stones, attributed by Sanconiatho to Ouranus, to have been magnets. — *Abury Described*, chap. 16. "It was usual (among the Egyptians) to place with much labour one vast stone upon another, for a religious memorial. The stones they thus placed they oftentimes poised so equally that they were affected with the least external force; nay, a breath of wind would sometimes make them vibrate." — *Bryant, Anal. Mythol.* vol. iii. The following accurate description of a Rocking Stone occurs in Pliny:—"Juxta Harpasa oppidum Asiæ cautes stat horrenda, uno digito mobilis: eadem, si toto corpore impellatur, resistens." Lib. ii. cap. 38.

† Εγω μεν ουμην δειοτερον ειναι το χρημα του βαιτυλου· ὁ δε Ισιδωρος δαιμονιον μαλλον ελεγεν ειναι· γαρ τινα δαιμονα τον κινουντα αυτον.—*Vita Isidori, apud Photium.* But though Isidorus, according to this statement of his biographer Damascius, imagined some demon to be stirring within the stone, it is gravely explained that he did not suppose it to be of the class of noxious demons, nor yet one of the immaterial and pure.

‡ Sometimes, however, as in the case of that Bætylos which formed the sta-

were, also, however, some answering exactly to the description of the Druidical rocking-stones, as appears from the account given in Ptolemy Hephæstion, an author cited by Photius, of a vast Gigonian stone, as he calls it, which stood on the shores of the ocean, and which, though it might be stirred by the stalk of an asphodel, no human force could remove.* It is rather remarkable, too, that, as we learn from a passage of Apollonius Rhodius †, not only was this delicate poise of the stone produced sometimes, as among the Druids, by art, but a feeling of sacredness was also attached to such productions, and they were connected, as in the Druidical ritual, with interment.

The sacred Hills and Tumuli of the Irish were appropriated to a variety of purposes; for there the sacrifice was offered by the Priest, from thence the legislator or judge promulgated his decrees, and there the King, on his inauguration, was presented with the Wand of Power. Of these consecrated high places ‡, the most memorable was the Hill of Usneach, in West Meath, as well from the National Convention of which it was fre-

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tue of Cybele, and was supposed to have fallen from heaven, they must have been of a larger size. See *Remarques de l'Abbé Banier*, vol. v. p. 241.; as also a *Dissertation sur les Bætyles*, by M. Falconet, *Mémoires de l'Académie*, tom. vi.

* Phot. lib. iii. ——αὐ ανιοντας

† Τηνω ενι αμφιρυτη πεφνεν, και αμησατο γαιαι
Αμφ' αυτοις. στηλας τε δυω καθυπερθεν ετευξεν,
Ὧν ἑτερη, θαμβος περιοσιον ανδρασι λευσσειν,
Κινυται ηχηεντος ὑπο πνοιη βορεαο.—*Argonaut.* l. 1.

In Tenos, by the blue waves compass'd round,
High o'er the slain he heap'd the funeral mound;
Then rear'd two stones, to mark that sacred ground,—
One, poised so light that, (as the mariner sees
With wondering gaze,) it stirs at every breeze!

The term Στηλη, here used, though in its most general acceptation signifying a pillar or obelisk, was sometimes also employed to denote a rock.—See *Donnegan*, who refers for this meaning of the word to *Hermsterh.* ad *Lucian*, 1. p. 267.

‡ The worship of mountains, hills, and rivers, among the ancient Britons, is mentioned by Gildas, "montes ipsos aut colles aut fluvios . . . . . quibus divinus honor à cæco tunc populo cumulabatur," c. 2.; and that such superstition was not peculiar to the Celtic tribes, appears from the laws which, down to the eleventh century, prohibited the Anglo-Saxons from worshipping the tree, the rock, the stream, or fountain.—See *Palgrave's Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*, part i. chap. 4.

quently the scene*, as because, upon its summit, the limits of the five provinces of Ireland touched; and, in like manner as the field of Enna was called "the navel of Sicily †," and the site of the Temple of Delphi "the navel of the earth ‡," so the stone which marked this common boundary of the five Provinces into which the island was then divided, was termed "the navel of Ireland." § Here the Druids, on solemn occasions, were accustomed to hold their meetings ‖; according to the practice of their Gaulish brethren, who, as we learn from Cæsar, used to assemble annually, on the confines of the Carnutes, in a place accounted to be the centre of all Gaul, and there, consulting upon all controversies referred to them, pronounced decrees which were universally obeyed.¶

In the peculiar sacredness attached to the Hill of Usneach, as the common limit of the five provinces, we recognise that early form of idolatry which arose out of the natural respect paid to boundaries and frontiers, and which may be traced throughout the ancient superstitions of most countries. Hence mountains, those natural barriers between contiguous nations, first came to be regarded with reverence; and it has been shown**, that the Holy Mountains of the ancient Greeks, Asiatics, and Egyptians, were all of them situated upon marches or frontier grounds. When artificial limits or Termini††

* Ii certo anni tempore, in finibus Carnutum, quæ regio totius Galliæ media habetur, considunt in loco consecrato. Hic omnes undique qui controversias habent conveniunt, eorumque judiciis decretisque parent. — *De Bello Gallico*, lib. vi. cap. 13.

† Diodor. lib. v. ‡ Strab. lib. ix.

§ In lapide quodam conveniunt apud mediam juxta castrum de Kyllari, qui locus et umbilicus Hiberniæ dicitur quasi in medio et medullitio terræ positus. — Cap. 4.

‖ "The Dynast, or Chieftain, had certain judges under him, called Brehons, who, at stated times, sat in the open air, generally upon some hill, on a bench raised with green sods, where they distributed justice to the neighbours."—*Ware, Antiquities of Ireland*, chap. xi.

¶ Cæsar, lib. vi. c. 13.

** Dulaure, *Des Cultes antérieurs à l'Idolatrie*, chap. 8. Among the Holy Mountains of Greece, this writer has enumerated nearly a dozen, all bearing the name of Olympus, and all situated upon frontiers. Chap. ix.

†† Such was the homage paid to this Deity of landmarks and boundaries, that when room was required for the temple of Jupiter Olympius in the Capitol, the seat of every god, except Terminus, was removed.

came to be introduced, the adoration that had long been paid to the mountain, was extended also to the rude stone, detached from its mass, which performed conventionally the same important function. From this reverence attached to boundaries, the place chosen by the Gaulish Druids for their meetings derived likewise its claim to sacredness, being on the confines of that tribe of Celts, called the Carnutes.

Whenever an Irish King, or Chief, was to be inaugurated on one of their Hills, it was usual to place him upon a particular stone*, whereonwas imprinted the form of their first Chieftain's foot, and there proffer to him an oath to preserve the customs of the country. "There was then," says Spenser, who had himself witnessed the election of an Irish Dynast in this manner, "a wand delivered to him by the proper officers, with which in his hand, descending from the stone, he turned himself round, thrice forward and thrice backward."† In an account of the ceremonies performed at the initiation of the Kings of Tirconnel, we are told that, in presenting the new King with the wand, which was perfectly white and straight, the Chief who officiated used this form of words,—"Receive, O King! the auspicious badge of your authority, and remember

* The practice of seating the new King upon a stone, at his initiation, was the practice in many of the countries of Europe. The Dukes of Carinthia were thus inaugurated (Joan. Boem. de Morib. Gentium, lib. iii.). The monarchs of Sweden sat upon a stone placed in the centre of twelve lesser ones (Olaus Magn. de Ritu gent. septent. i. c. 18.), and in a similar kind of circle the Kings of Denmark were crowned.—(Hist. de Danemarck.) In reference to the enormous weight of the stones composing this last-mentioned monument, Mallet livelily remarks, "que de tout temps la superstition a imaginé qu'on ne pouvait adorer la divinité qu'en faisant pour elle des tours de force."

† The practice of turning round the body, in religious and other solemnities, was performed differently by different nations of antiquity; and Pliny, in stating that the Romans turned from the left to the right, or sunwise, adds, that the Gauls thought it more religious to turn from the right to the left. lib. xxviii. c. 5. See the commentators on this passage of Pliny, who trace the enjoinment of the practice in question to no less authorities than Pythagoras and Numa. The Celts, according to Posidonius (apud Athen. lib. iv.), turned always to the right in worshipping.—Τους θεους προσκυνουσιν επι τα δεξια στρεφομενοι. This practice, under the name of Deasoil, or motion according to the course of the sun, is still retained in the Scottish isles.—See *Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary*, *Toland's History of the Druids*, *Borlase's Cornwall*, &c.

to imitate, in your conduct, the straightness and whiteness of this wand."

So solemn and awful were the feelings associated with their Sacred Hills by the Irish, that one of their poets, in singing the praises of St. Patrick, mentions particularly, as a proof of his zeal and courage, that he "preached of God in the Hills and by the Sacred Founts."* With such tenacity, too, was transmitted, from age to age, the popular reverence for all such judgments as were issued from those high places, that so late as the time of Henry VIII. the same traditional feeling prevailed; and we have it on high authority that, at that period, "the English laws were not observed eight days, whereas the laws passed by the Irish in *their hills* they kept firm and stable, without breaking them for any fee or reward."†

Such of these Sacred Mounts as are artificial have in general been called either Barrows or Cairns, according as the materials of which they are composed may have been earth or stones; and both kinds, though frequently appropriated to the various purposes just mentioned, were, it is plain, in their original destination, tombs, — such as are to be found in every region of the habitable world, and preceded, as monuments of the dead, even the Pyramids themselves.‡ Among the Greeks, it was not unusual to erect a pillar upon the summit of the barrow, as in the instance of the tumulus

* Metrical Life of St. Patrick, attributed to his disciple Fiech; but evidently of a somewhat later period.

† "A Breviate of the getting of Ireland, and of the Decay of the same," by Baron Finglas, an Irishman, made Chief Baron of the Exchequer, in Ireland, by Henry VIII., and afterwards Chief Justice of the King's Bench.—*Ware's Writers.*

‡ After comparing the primæval Celtic mound with the pyramidal heaps of the East, Clarke says, "In fact, the Scythian Mound, the Tartar Tèpè, the Teutonic Barrow, and the Celtic Cairn, do all of them preserve a monumental form, which was more anciently in use than that of the Pyramid, because it is less artificial; and a proof of its alleged antiquity may be deduced from the mere circumstance of its association with the Pyramids of Egypt, even if the testimony of Herodotus were less explicit as to the remote period of its existence among northern nations."—*Travels*, vol. v. chap. 5. In the Travels of Professor Pallas may be found an account of the immense variety of these sepulchral heaps, some of earth, some of stones, which he saw in traversing the regions inhabited by the Cossacks, Tartars, and Mongul tribes.

of Elpenor, described in the twelfth book of the Odyssey, and still more memorably in that of Achilles, on the Sigean promontory, which is said still to bear traces of the sepulchral pillar, that once surmounted it. A similar form of memorial is mentioned by antiquaries as existing in different parts of Ireland *, and the great barrow at New Grange is said to have originally had a stone of considerable bulk upon its summit. Of the dedication of the Cairns and Barrows to the Sun †, there are abundant proofs throughout antiquity; and as from Grian, the Celtic name of the sun, Apollo evidently derived his title of Grynæus, so to Carne, the term, in Celtic, for these tumuli, his title Carneus is no less manifestly to be traced.

The veneration of particular groves and trees was another of those natural abuses of worship, into which a great mass of mankind, in the first ages, lapsed; and, as happens in all such corruptions of religion, a practice innocent and even holy in its origin soon degenerated into a system of the darkest superstition. It was in a grove planted by himself, that Abraham "called on the everlasting God," and Gideon's offering under the oak was approved by the same heavenly Voice, which yet doomed the groves of Baal that stood in its neighbourhood to destruction.‡ In the reign of Ahab, the period when idolatry was in its most flourishing state, we find that, besides the priests of Baal, or the sun,

* See *Gough's Camden*, vol. iii.; *King's Munimenta Antiqua*, book i. This latter writer, in speaking of New Grange, says, that it "so completely corresponds with the accounts we have of the Asiatic Barrows of Patroclus and of Halyattes, and with the description of the Tartarian barrows of the Scythian kings, that in reading the accounts of one, we even seem to be reading an account of the other."—Book i. chap. 6. Rejecting as vague and unsatisfactory the grounds on which New Grange and other such monuments are attributed to the Danes, this well-informed antiquary concludes, "We may, therefore, from such strong resemblance between primæval and nearly patriarchal customs in the East, and those aboriginal works in Ireland and Britain in the West, much more naturally infer that these sepulchral barrows are almost without exception the works of the first race of settlers in these countries."—*Ib.*

† Silius Italicus represents Apollo as delighting in the Cairn-fires:—

"Quum pius Arcitenens incensis gaudet acervis."—Lib. v. 177.

Among the different sorts of Cairns in Cornwall, there is one which they call Karn Leskyg, or the Karn of Burnings.

‡ Gen. xxi. 33.—Judges vi. 23—28.

there existed also a distinct order of Priesthood, who, from the peculiar worship they presided over, were called Prophets of the Groves.* In the religious sytem of the Celts is found a combination of both these forms of superstition, and there exist in Ireland, to this day, in the old traditions, and the names of places, full as many and striking vestiges of the worship of trees as of that of the sun. Though at present so scantily clothed with wood, one of the earliest vernacular names, this country Fiodha Inis, or the Woody Island, proves that the materials for tree worship were not, in former ages, wanting on her shores. The name of the Vodii, an ancient tribe inhabiting the southern coast of the county of Cork, signifies dwellers in a woody country †, and Youghall, formerly Ochill, is said to have been similarly derived. It appears that in general the old names of places, whether hills or plains, are found to be words implying forests, groves, or trees. The poet Spenser has commemorated the Ireland of his day as abounding in shade and foliage ‡, and we collect from Stanihurst that the natives had been accused of living savagely in the dark depths of their forests. It is, indeed, alleged, by competent authority §, to have been made evident from an examination of the soil, that, at no very remote period, the country must have been abundantly wooded.

* "The Prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the Prophets of the Groves, four hundred."—1 *Kings*, xviii. 19.

† Quasi Britannicè dicas *Sylvestres*, sive, apud sylvas degentes. —*Baxter. Glossar. Antiquitat. Brit.—Smith's County of Cork.*

‡ *Cantos of Mutability*; where, in describing Ireland, he speaks of "woods and forests which therein abound." In his View of the State of Ireland, also, speaking more particularly of the country between Dublin and Wexford, he says:—"Though the whole track of the country be mountainous and woody, yet there are many goodly valleys," &c. Campion likewise asserts, that the island was covered with forests; yet, so rapid must have been their destruction, that, not much more than a century after Spenser and Campion wrote, we find Sir Henry Piers, in his Chorographical Description of the County of Meath, complaining of the want of timber of bulk, "wherewith it was anciently well stored;" and recommending to parliament a speedy provision for "planting and raising all sorts of forest trees." —*Collectan.* vol. i.

§ "I never saw one hundred contiguous acres in Ireland in which there were not evident signs that they were once wood, or at least very well wooded. Trees, and the roots of trees, of the largest size, are dug up in all the bogs; and, in the cultivated counties, the stumps of trees destroyed show that the destruction has not been of very ancient date." —*Arthur Young, Tour in Ireland.*

The oak, the statue of the Celtic Jove *, was here, as in all other countries, selected for peculiar consecration; and the Plain of Oaks, the Tree of the Field of Adoration †, under which the Dalcassian Chiefs were inaugurated, and the Sacred Oak of Kildare, show how early and long this particular branch of the primitive worship prevailed.

By some antiquaries, who affect to distinguish between the Celtic and Gothic customs in Ireland, the mode of inaugurating the Dalcassian chiefs is alleged to have been derived from the first inhabitants or Celts; while, on the other hand, the use of the Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny, in the ceremony, was introduced, they say, by the later, or Scythic colonies. In this latter branch of the opinion, they are borne out by the ancient traditions of the country, which trace to the Danaans, a Scythic or Gothic tribe, the first importation of the custom. That the worship of stones, however, out of which this ceremony sprung, was a superstition common not only to both of these races, but to all the first tribes of mankind, is a fact admitted by most inquirers on the subject. The same may be affirmed of every branch of the old primitive superstition; and, therefore, to attempt to draw any definite or satisfactory line of distinction, between the respective forms of idolatry of the two great European races, is a speculation that must be disconcerted and baffled at every step. A well-known dogmatist in Irish antiquities, desirous to account, by some other than the obvious causes, for that close resemblance which he

* Αγαλμα δε Διος Κελτικον ὑψηλη δρυς. — *Max. Tyr.* Serm. 38.

† *Magh-Adhair.* — "A plain, or field of adoration or worship, where an open temple, consisting of a circle of tall straight stone pillars, with a very large flat stone, called *cromleac*, serving for an altar, was constructed by the Druids, . . . several plains of this name, Magh-Adhair, were known in Ireland, particularly one in the country now called the County of Clare, where the kings of the O'Brien race were inaugurated."—*O'Brien's Irish Dictionary.* It was under a remarkable tree on this plain that the ceremony of initiating the Dalcassian kings took place. (*O'Brien, in voce Magh-bile.*) In the Annals of the Four Masters for the year 981, there is an account of the destruction of this Sacred Tree.

For the origin of four of the great Dalcassian families, viz. the O'Briens, the Mac Mahons, the O'Kennedys, and the Macnamaras, see *Rer. Hibernicar. Script.* prol. 1. 133.

cannot deny to exist between the Celtic and Gothic superstitions, has had recourse to the hypothesis, that a coalition between the two rituals must, at some comparatively late period, have taken place.* But a natural view of the subject would, assuredly, have led to the very reverse of this conclusion, showing that, originally, the forms of idolatry observed by both races were the same, and that any difference observable, at a later period, has been the natural result of time and circumstances.

CHAP. III.

THE DRUIDS, OR MAGI OF THE IRISH.

The religious system of the Pagan Irish having been thus shown, as regards both its ceremonies and its objects, to have been, in many respects, peculiar to themselves, it remains to be considered whether the order of Priesthood which presided over their religion did not also, in many points, differ from the Priests of Britain and of Gaul. Speaking generally, the term Druidism applies to the whole of that mixed system of hierurgy, consisting partly of patriarchal, and partly of idolatrous observances, which the first inhabitants of Europe are known to have brought with them in their migration from the East; and the cause of the differences observable in the rituals of the three countries where alone that worship can be traced is to be sought for as well in the local circumstances peculiar to each, as in those relations towards other countries in which, either by commerce or position, they were placed. Thus, while to

* "The Druids, when known to the Greeks and Romans, had united the Celtic and Scythic rituals, and exercised their functions both in groves and caves."—*Ledwich, Antiquities of Ireland*, p. 49.

her early connection with the Phœnicians the Sacred Island was doubtless indebted for the varieties of worship wafted to her secluded shores, the adoption by the Gallic Druids of the comparatively modern Gods of Greece and Rome, or rather of their own original divinities under other names, may, together with the science and the learning they were found in possession of by the Romans, be all traced to the intercourse held by them, for at least five hundred years before, with the colony of Phocæan Greeks established at Marseilles.

Of all that relates to the Druids of Gaul, their rites, doctrines, and discipline, we have received ample and probably highly coloured statements from the Romans. Our knowledge of the Irish Magi, or Druids, is derived partly from the early Lives of St. Patrick, affording brief but clear glimpses of the dark fabric which he came to overturn, and partly from those ancient records of the country, founded upon others, as we shall see, still more ancient, and so reaching back to times when Druidism was still in force. With the state or system of this order, in Britain, there are no such means of becoming acquainted. It is a common error, indeed, to adduce as authority respecting the British Druids, the language of writers who profess to speak only of the Druidical priesthood of Gaul; a confusion calculated to convey an unjust impression of both these bodies; as the latter, — even without taking into consideration their alleged conferences with Pythagoras, which may be reasonably called in question,—had access, it is known, through the Massilian Greeks, to such sources of science and literature, as were manifestly beyond the reach of their secluded brethren of Britain. Even of the Gaulish Druids, however, the description transmitted by the Romans is such as, from its vagueness alone, might be fairly suspected of exaggeration; and the indefinite outline they left has been since dilated and filled up by others, till there is scarcely a department of human knowledge with which these Druids are not represented to have been conversant. Nor is this embellished description restricted

merely to the Gaulish priesthood, but given also as a faithful picture of the Druids of Britain; though, among all the Greek and Roman writers who have treated of the subject, there is not one — with a slight exception, perhaps, as regards Pliny, — who has not limited his remarks solely and professedly to Gaul.

The little notice taken by the Romans of the state of this worship among the Britons, is another point which appears worthy of consideration. Instead of being general throughout the country, as might have been expected from the tradition mentioned by Cæsar, the existence of Druidism appears to have been confined to a few particular spots; and the chief seat of its strength and magnificence lay in the region nearest to the shores of Ireland, North Wales. It was there alone, as is manifest from their own accounts, and from the awe and terror with which, it is said, the novelty of the sight then affected them*, that the Romans ever encountered any Druids during their whole stay in Britain; nor did Cæsar, who dwells so particularly upon the Druids of Gaul, and even mentions the prevalent notion that they had originated in Britain, ever hint that, while in that country, he had either met with any of their order, or been able to collect any information concerning their tenets or rites. The existence, still, in various parts of England, of what are generally called druidical monuments, is insufficient to prove that Druidism had ever flourished in those places; such monuments having been common to all the first races of Europe†, and though forming a part of the ritual of the Druids, by no means necessarily implying that it had existed where they are found. In the region of Spain occupied anciently by the Turditani, the most learned of all the Celtic tribes, there is to be found a greater number of what are called Druidical remains than in any other part of the Peninsula.‡ Yet, of the exist-

* Novitate aspectus perculere milites.—*Tacit. Annal.* lib. xiv. c. 30.

† For proofs of the adoption of circular stone temples, and other such monuments, by the Gothic nations, see Ledwich's Antiquities (*Pagan State of Ireland, and its Remains*), and Pinkerton's *Enquiry*, &c. part iii. chap. 12.

‡ History of Spain and Portugal, Cab. Cyclo. Introduction.

ence of an order of Druids among that people, neither Strabo nor any other authority makes mention.

The only grounds that exist for extending and appropriating to the British Druids all that the Greek and Roman writers have said solely of those of Gaul, are to be found in the single, but doubtless important, passage wherein it is asserted by Cæsar *, that Druidism had first originated in Britain, and was from thence derived by the Gauls. Presuming on the truth of this assertion, it has been further concluded, as a matter of course, that all the features of the parent were exactly similar to those attributed to the offspring; and upon this arbitrary assumption have all the accounts, so fully and confidently given, of the rites, doctrines, and learning of the British Druids been founded. With respect to the statement, however, of Cæsar, an obvious solution suggests itself, arising naturally out of all that has been advanced in the preceding pages, and amply sufficient, as I think, to account for the curious tradition which he mentions. We have seen, by the strong, though scattered, lights of evidence, which have been brought to concentre upon this point, at what an early period Ireland attracted the notice of that people, who were, in those times, the great carriers, not only of colonies and commerce, but also of shrines and divinities, to all quarters of the world. So remote, indeed, is the date of her first emergence into celebrity, that at a time when the Carthaginians knew of Albion but the name, the renown of Ierne as a seat of holiness had already become ancient; her devotion to the form of worship which had been transported, perhaps from Samothrace, to her shores, having won for her, as we have seen, the designation of the Sacred Island. Those who look back to the prominent station then held by her, as a sort of emporium of idolatry, will not deem it unlikely that a new religion may have originated on her shores; and that it was to her alone the prevalent tradition of the times of Cæsar must have attributed the

* Disciplina in Britannia reperta, atque inde in Galliam translata esse existimatur. — *De Bell. Gall.* lib. vi. c. 13.

reputation of having first moulded the common creed of all the Celts into that peculiar form which has become memorable under the appellation of Druidism.

Whatever changes this form may have undergone in its adoption by Gaul and Britain, were the natural result of local circumstances, and the particular genius of each people; while the greater infusion of orientalism into the theology of the Irish, arose doubtless from the longer continuance of their intercourse with the East. How large a portion of the religious customs of Persia were adopted by the Magi or Druids of Ireland, has already been amply shown; and to these latter Pliny* doubtless refers, under the same mistake as Cæsar, when, in speaking of the Magi of different countries, he remarks of the ceremonies practised in Britain, that they were of such a nature as to render it probable that they were the original of those of the Persians. The favourite tenet as well of Druidism as of Magism, the transmigration of the soul†, which the Druids of Gaul are thought to have derived from the Massilian Greeks, might have reached them, through Ireland, from some part of the East, at a much earlier period; this favourite doctrine of all Oriental theologues, from the Brachmans of India to the priests of Egypt, being found inculcated also through the medium of some of the traditions of the ancient Irish. The use, both by Pliny and Cæsar, of the name Britain instead of Ireland argues but little against the presumption that the latter was the country really

* Britannia hodieque eam attonite celebrat tantis cæremoniis, ut dedisse Persis videri possit. — *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. xxx. c. 4. On the intimation contained in this passage, Whitaker has founded a supposition, that, at some period, which he calls the Divine Age, the doctrine of the Western Druids may have penetrated so far East; "thus solving," he says, "Pliny's conjecture of the Persians receiving it from them, which must have been in times comparatively to which the foundation of Rome is hardly not a modern incident."— *Celtic Vocabulary.*

† The prevalence, among them, of a belief in the transmigration of the soul, may be inferred from the fable respecting Ruan, one of the colony that landed in Ireland, under Partholan, some two or three centuries after the Flood. Of this ancient personage, it was believed that he continued to live, through a long series of transmigrations, till so late as the time of St. Patrick, when, having resumed the human shape, he communicated to the saint all he knew of the early history of the island, and was then baptised and died. — *Nicholson's Library*, chap. 2.—*Rerum Hibern. Script.* Ep. Nunc.

designed. The frequent employment of the plural, Britanniæ *, to denote the whole of the British Isles, was, in itself, by no means unlikely to lead to such a confusion. Besides, so ignorant were the Roman scholars respecting the geography of these regions, that it is not impossible they may have supposed Britain and Ireland to be one and the same country; seeing that, so late as the period when Agricola took the command of the province, they had not yet ascertained whether Britannia was an island or a continent.†

To his statement, that Britain was thought to have originated the institution of Druidism, Cæsar adds, that those who were desirous of studying diligently its doctrines, repaired in general to that country for the purpose.‡ If, as the reasons I have above adduced render by no means improbable, the school resorted to by these students was really Ireland, the religious pre-eminence thus enjoyed by her, in those pagan days, was a sort of type of her social position many centuries after, when again she shone forth as the Holy Island of the West; and again it was a common occurrence, as in those Druidical times, to hear said of a student in divinity, that he was "gone to pursue a course of sacred instruction in Hibernia." §

While, from all that has been here advanced, it may be assumed as not improbable that Ireland was the true source of this ancient creed of the West, there is yet another point to be noticed, confirmatory of this opinion, which is, that the term Druid, concerning whose

* Thus Catullus: — "Hunc Galliæ timent, hunc timent Britanniæ." — *Carm.* 27.

† Hanc oram novissimi maris tunc primum Romana classis circumvecta insulam esse Britanniam affirmavit. — *Tacit. Agric.* 10. Plutarch, in his Life of Cæsar, asserts that the very existence of such a place as Britain had been doubted.

‡ Et nunc qui diligentius eam rem cognoscere volunt plerumque illo discendi causa proficiscuntur. — *De Bell Gall.* lib. vi. c. 13.

§ "St. Patrick's disciples in Ireland were such great proficients in the Christian religion, that, in the age following, Ireland was termed Sanctorum Patria, i. e. the Country of Saints. . . . . The Saxons, in that age, flocked hither as to the great mart of learning; and this is the reason why we find this so often in our writers, — 'Amandatus est ad disciplinam in Hibernia,' *such a one was sent over into Ireland to be educated.*"—*Camden.*

origin so much doubt has existed, is to be found genuinely, and without any of the usual straining of etymology, in the ancient Irish language. The supposed derivation of the term from Drus, the Greek word for an oak, has long been rejected as idle*; the Greek language, though flowing early from the same Asiatic source, being far more likely to have borrowed from than contributed to that great mother of most of the European tongues, the Celtic. It is, however, unnecessary to go any farther for the origin of the name than to the Irish language itself, in which the word *Draoid* is found, signifying a cunning man, or Magus, and implying so fully all that is denoted by the latter designation as to have been used as an equivalent for it in an Irish version of the Gospel of St. Matthew, where, instead of "the wise men, or Magi, came from the East," it is rendered, "the Druids came from the East;" and, in like manner, in the Old Testament, Exod. vii. 11., the words "magicians of Egypt" are made "Druids of Egypt."†

CHAP. IV.

ANTIQUITY OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE. — LEARNING OF THE IRISH MAGI, OR DRUIDS.

Our accounts of the learning of the Irish Druids, though far more definite and satisfactory than any that relate directly to the Druids of Britain, are still but imperfect and vague. Before we enter, however, on this

* For the various derivations of the term Druid that have been suggested by different writers, see *Frickius de Druid.* pars i. cap. i.

† Matt. ii. 1. The Irish version is thus given by Toland: — Feuch tangadar Draoithe o naird shoir go Hiarulasem: — and the passage in Exod. vii. 11. is thus rendered: — Anos Draoithe na Hégipte dor innedursanfós aran modhgceadna le nandroigheachtuibh.

topic, a few remarks on a subject intimately connected with it, the ancient language of the country, will not be deemed an unnecessary preliminary. Abundant and various as are the monuments to which Ireland can point, as mute evidences of her antiquity, she boasts a yet more striking proof in the living language of her people,—in that most genuine, if not only existing, dialect of the oldest of all European tongues,—the tongue which, whatever name it may be called by, according to the various and vague theories respecting it, whether Japhetan, Cimmerian, Pelasgic, or Celtic, is accounted most generally to have been the earliest brought from the East, by the Noachidæ, and accordingly to have been "the vehicle of the first knowledge that dawned upon Europe."* In the still written and spoken dialect of this primæval language† we possess a monument of the high antiquity of the people to whom it belongs, which no cavil can reach, nor any doubts disturb.

According to the view, indeed, of some learned philologers, the very imperfections attributed to the Irish language,—the predominance in it of gutturals, and the incompleteness of its alphabet,—are both but additional and convincing proofs, as well of its directly Eastern origin, as of its remote antiquity; the tongues of the East, before the introduction of aspirates, having abounded, as it appears, with gutturals‡, and the alphabet derived

* Enquiries concerning the First Inhabitants, Languages, &c. of Europe, by Mr. Wise.

† According to the learned but fanciful Lazius, the Irish language abounds with Hebrew words, and had its origin in the remotest ages of the world. (*De Gentium Migrationibus.*) A French writer, Marcel, also, in speaking of the Irish idiom or dialect, says, "On peut dire avec quelque probabilité qu'il doit remonter à une époque beaucoup plus reculée que les idiomes de la plupart des autres contrées de l'Europe." This writer, who was Directeur de l'Imprimerie Impériale, under Napoleon, published an Irish alphabet from types belonging to the Propaganda of Rome, which were sent, by the order of Napoleon, to Paris. Prefixed to his publication are some remarks on the grammatical structure of the Irish language, which he thus concludes:—"Par cette marche conjugative elle se rapproche de la simplicité des langues anciennes et orientales. Elle s'en rapproche encore par les lettres serviles ou auxiliares, les affixes et les préfixes, qu'elle emploie comme la langue Hébraïque." With the types of the Propaganda, the Irish Catechism of Molloy, called Lucerna Fidelium, was printed.

‡ "La lingua Punica certamente venne pronunziata anticamente colla gorgia, e ne resta provato in quel piccol monumento che la scena prima

from the Phœnicians by the Greeks having had but the same limited number of letters which compose the Irish.* That the original Cadmeian number was no more than sixteen is the opinion, with but few exceptions, of the whole learned world; and that such exactly is the number of the genuine Irish alphabet has been proved satisfactorily by the reverend and learned librarian of Stowe.† Thus, while all the more recent and mixed forms of language adopted the additional letters of the Greeks, the Irish alone‡ continued to adhere to the original number—the same number no doubt which Herodotus saw graven on the tripods in the temple of Apollo at Thebes—the same number which the people of Attica adhered to with such constancy, that it became a customary phrase, or proverb, among the Greeks to say of any thing very ancient, that it was "in Attic letters."§ To so characteristic an extent did the Irish

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di Plauto ci ha lasciato col carattere Latino."—*G. P. Agius de Solandis*, quoted in Vallancey's Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language. "In the Oriental languages gutturals abounded; these by degrees softened into mere aspirates," &c.—Rees's Cyclopædia, art. *Gothic Language*. In tracing the Eastern origin of the Celtic, Dr. Pritchard remarks, that "words derived by the western from the eastern languages are changed in a peculiar way. The most general of these alterations is the substituting of guttural for sibilant letters." May not such words, however, have been derived previously to the introduction of aspirates and sibilants?

* "Now, if this alphabet (the Irish) had not been borrowed at least before the time of the Trojan war, when Palamedes made the first addition to it, we can hardly conceive it should be so simple. Or, if the Druids should cull it, it would be remarkable that they should hit precisely on the letters of Cadmus, and reject none but the later additions."—*Smith's Gaelic Antiquities*, chap. 4.

Huddlestone, the editor of Toland, also remarks upon this subject,—"If the Irish had culled or selected their alphabet from that of the Romans, how, or by what miracle, could they have hit on the identical letters which Cadmus brought from Phœnicia, and rejected all the rest? Had they thrown sixteen dice sixteen times, and turned up the same number every time, it would not have been so marvellous as this."

† Detractis itaque quinque dipthongis, et consonantibus supra memoratis, qui nullibi in lingua Hibernica extant, non remanent plures quam sexdecim simplicia elementa, quot fuisse antiquissimas Cadmeias, Plinius, et Nonnus, et antiquissimi scriptores una voce testatum reliquere.—*O'Connor, Annal. Inisfall. De Inscript. Ogham.*

‡ "If they had had letters first from St. Patrick, would they have diverted from the forms of the letters? Would they have altered the order? Would they have sunk seven (eight) letters? For in every country they have rather increased than diminished the number of letters, except those of the Hebrew and Irish, which are *in statu quo* to this day."—*Parsons's Remains of Japhet.*

§ In reference to this proverb, Lilius Geraldus, quoting the assertion of some ancient writer that treaties against the barbarians were ratified in

people imitate this fidelity, that even the introduction among them of the Roman alphabet by St. Patrick did not tempt them into any innovation upon their own. On the contrary, so wedded were they to their own letters, that, even in writing Latin words, they would never admit any Roman character that was not to be found in their primitive alphabet, but employed two or more of their own ancient characters to represent the same organic sound.*

It will be perceived, from the foregoing remarks, that I conceive the Irish to have been early acquainted with the use of letters; and such appears to me, I own, the conclusion to which — attended, though it be, with some difficulties — a fair enquiry into this long-agitated question ought to lead. In asserting that letters were anciently known to this people, it is by no means implied that the knowledge extended beyond the learned or Druidical class, — the diffusion of letters among the community at large being, in all countries, one of the latest results of civilised life. It is most probable, too, that, among the Irish, the art was still in a rude and primitive state; their materials having been, as we are told, tablets formed of the wood of the beech, upon which they wrote with an iron pencil, or stylus, and from whence the letters themselves were called, originally, Feadha, or Woods. With imple-

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Ionic, not in Attic, letters, adds, "quasi, ut puto, dicat literis recentioribus."—*Lil. Girald. de Poetis.*

* "Thus in all words begun or ended by X, instead of writing that simple character, they never chose to represent it otherwise than by employing two of the Roman characters, viz. *gs* or *cs*; a trouble they certainly might have saved themselves, at least in writing the Latin, had they not rejected it as an exotic character, and not existing in their alphabet."—*Literature of the Irish after Christianity*, Collectan. No. 5.

This mode of expressing the letter X was anciently practised by the Romans themselves; but had been disused ages before the time when it could be supposed to have been communicated to them by the Irish. Another curious point, respecting the Irish alphabet, is thus noticed by the author of *Galic Antiquities*:—"They could much easier have spared one of Cadmus's letters than some of those which have been afterwards joined to it. The Greek χ, for example, expresses a sound so common in the Galic, and so imperfectly expressed by the combined powers of *c* (or *k*) and *h*, that they could not possibly have omitted it, had it been in the alphabet when they adopted the rest of the letters."

ments denoting so early a stage of the art — a stage corresponding to that in which the Romans wrote their laws upon wood — the uses to which writing could have been applied were of course limited and simple, seldom extending, perhaps, beyond the task of transmitting those annals and genealogies which, there is every reason to believe, as we shall see, were kept regularly from, at least, the first century of our era.

By the doubters of Irish antiquities the time of the apostleship of St. Patrick has been the epoch generally assigned for the first introduction of letters into that country. This hypothesis, however, has been compelled to give way to the high authority of Mr. Astle, by whom inscribed monuments of stone were discovered in Ireland, which prove the Irish, as he says, "to have had letters before the arrival of St. Patrick in that kingdom."* It is true, this eminent antiquary also asserts, that "none of these inscribed monuments are so ancient as to prove that the Irish were possessed of letters before the Romans had intercourse with the Britons;" but the entire surrender by him of the plausible and long-maintained notion, that to St. Patrick the Irish were indebted for their first knowledge of this gift, leaves no other probable channel through which, in later times, it could have reached them; and accordingly sends us back to seek its origin in those remote ages, towards which the traditions of the people themselves invariably point, for its source. Of any communication held by the Romans with Ireland, there is not the least trace or record; and the notion that, at a period when the light of History had found its way into these regions, such an event as the introduction of letters into a newly discovered island should have been passed unrecorded by either the dispensers or the receivers of the boon, seems altogether improbable.

Besides the alphabet they used for ordinary occasions, the ancient Irish were in possession also, we are told, of a secret mode of writing, such as is known to have been used for sacred purposes among the

* Origin and Progress of Writing, chap. v.

hierarchies of the East. And here, again, we find their pretensions borne out by such apt concurrence with antiquity, as could hardly have been concerted in even the most subtle scheme of vanity and imposture. It has been already mentioned, that the first Irish letters were, from the material on which they had been first inscribed, called Feadha, or Woods, — in the same manner as, according to a learned Hebraist, every word denoting books in the Pentateuch has direct reference to the material, whether wood or stone, of which they were composed.* With a similar and no less striking coincidence, the name Ogam, or Ogma, applied traditionally to the occult forms of writing among the Irish, and of whose meaning the Irish themselves seem, till of late, to have been ignorant †, is found to be a primitive Celtic term, signifying the Secrets of Letters ‡ ; and, to confirm still farther this meaning, it is known that the Gaulish god of Eloquence was, on account of the connection of his art with letters, called, by his worshippers, Ogmius.§

We have seen that, among the inscribed monuments of stone, of which there are so many throughout Ireland, the learned Astle found proofs to satisfy him that the Irish had letters before the arrival of St. Patrick. Could some of the inscriptions, said to be in the Ogham character, be once satisfactorily authenticated, they would place beyond doubt the claims of the natives to an ancient form of alphabet peculiarly their own. It is possible that, in a few of these instances, the lines taken for letters may have been no more than the natural marks,

* " Il n'y a pas une expression dans Moyse ou il parle des livres qui ne puisse s'expliquer dans le sens de ces tables de pierre et de bois."—*Calmet.* The wood of the beech has been the material used for the first attempts at writing in most countries. " Non displicet a fago arbore derivari quæ Germanis adhuc hodie die *Buche*, Succis *Boken*, Danis *Bog* dicitur." See *J. P. Murray, Animadvers. in Literat. Runic. Commentat. Soc. Reg. Scient. Gotting.* tom. ii., where a number of other curious particulars on this subject may be found.

† The word is not to be found in O'Brien's Irish Dictionary, and is, I believe, omitted, also, in most of the others.

‡ Probe noverim vocabulum Oga, Ogum, vel Ogma, Celtè siguificasse secreta literarum, vel literas ipsas.—*Keysler, Antiqq. Septent*

§ Lucian. Hercul. Gall.

or furrows, in the stone; as was frequently the case with those lines, supposed to be mystic characters, upon the Bætyli, or Charmed Stones, of the ancients.* The professed date, too, of the Ogham inscription, on the mountain of Callan, of which so many and various versions have been suggested, has been called in question by a learned antiquary seldom slow to believe in the evidence of his country's early civilisation.† Neither does any discovery seem to have been yet made of the tomb of Fiacra, a hero commemorated in the ancient Book of Ballymote, who received his death-wound in the battle of Caonry, A. D. 380, and was buried in Meath, with his name inscribed, in the Ogham character, on his tomb.‡ There is, however, an account given in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, on the authority of two most intelligent and trustworthy witnesses §, of the discovery of a stone inscribed with undoubted Ogham letters, in the neighbourhood of the town of Armagh, and on a spot resembling, in many of its features, the remarkable tumulus at New Grange. ||

In addition to the consistency of this hierogrammatic mode of writing, with all else that is known of the antiquities of the country, the traditions relating

* "Some of the Bætyls," says M. Falconnet, "avoient des lignes gravées sur leur surface. Damascius les appelle lettres pour rendre la chose plus mystérieuse: effectivement, ces lignes que je crois être précisément ce qu'Orphée appelle rides, forment une apparence de caractères." — *Disscrt. sur les Bætyls.*

† Dr. O'Connor, de inscript. Ogham.— *Annal. Inisfal.*

‡ Vallancey, Irish Grammar, Pref. 12.— *O'Connor, Ep. Nunc.* 33. and *Annal. Inisfall.* 136.

§ Doctor Brown and the Rev. Mr. Young, both fellows of Trin. Coll. Dublin. In a letter from Doctor Brown (quoted in a paper, vol viii. of the Irish Transactions), he is represented to have said, that "notwithstanding all that has been written, by very learned men, of the Ogham character, and some modern testimonies respecting its existence, he was extremely incredulous as to any monuments being actually extant on which it could be found, and disposed to think that literary enthusiasm had mistaken natural furrows on the stone for engraved characters: but, having satisfied himself that he was in error, he thought it a duty to the Academy to mention a monument of the kind that had come under his knowledge."

|| "They observed enough to impress them with a strong persuasion that the hill is excavated, the entrance being very like that at New Grange. Another resemblance is in the surrounding circle of upright stones, which (together with the want of a ditch or fosse) always distinguishes such tumuli."— *Dr. Brown's Account.*

to its use in sepulchral inscriptions may be traced far into past times; and among other ancient writings in which allusion to it occurs, may be mentioned the tale of the Children of Usneach, "one of the Three Tragic Stories of Eirin," in which the interment of the young lovers is thus druidically represented:—"After this song, Deirdri flung herself upon Naisi in the grave, and died forthwith; and stones were laid over their monumental heap, their Ogham name was inscribed, and their dirge of lamentation was sung."*

I have already mentioned, as a proof of the existence of an original alphabet in the country before the introduction of that of the Romans, the characteristic obstinacy with which they adhered to their own limited number of letters,—insomuch as that, even in writing Latin words, they took the unnecessary trouble of supplying, by combinations from their own original characters, the place of those additional letters of the Romans which they regarded as exotic. It may here be added, that the peculiar order of their native alphabet, in which B, L, I, N, stand as the initial letters, would afford such an instance of downright caprice and dictation, in mere beginners with these elements, as may be pronounced utterly incredible.

Another argument, equally strong, in favour of their claims to an original ancient alphabet, may be drawn from the use, in Irish orthography, of what are called quiescent consonants, which, though always preserved in writing, are omitted in pronunciation. If this characteristic of the language be really ancient, and not rather one of those corruptions or innovations which the bardic rhymers are accused of introducing for the sake of the euphony or the rhythm †, there could be no more con-

* For a prose version of this ancient Irish story, which furnished the foundation of Macpherson's Darthula, see *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Dublin.*

† See, for the modes by which "the bards, or versificators, were accustomed to stretch out words by multiplying the syllables according to the exigency of their rhymes," O'Brien's Irish Dict. (*Remarks on the Letter A.*) One of those methods was "by throwing between two vowels an ad-

vincing proof of the existence of letters, from a very early period; as by no other means, it is plain, than by a written standard could the memory of letters, left unpronounced in speaking, have been preserved.

The state of purity in which, considering its great primæval antiquity, the dialect of the Celtic spoken in Ireland was found existing, when first that country attracted the notice of modern Europe, appears in itself a sufficient proof that the use of letters had long been known to her people. It seems hardly possible, indeed, to conceive that, without the aid of a written standard, this language could have retained to such a degree its original structure and forms, as even to serve as a guide and auxiliary to the philologer in his researches into the affinities and gradual formation of other more recent tongues. That there may be inherent in an original language like the Irish a self-conservative principle, it is most easy to believe; but we yet perceive, in the instance of the Highlands of Scotland *, how much the dialect of the Irish spoken by that people has, from the want or disuse of a written standard, become, in the course of time, changed and corrupted; and still more remarkably in the instance of Ireland itself, where, notwithstanding its acknowledged possession of the art of writing from the time of the mission of St. Patrick, so great a change has the language undergone during that interval, not only as spoken but as written, that there are still extant several fragments of ancient laws and poems, whose obsolete idiom defies the skill of even the most practised Irish scholars to interpret them.†

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ventitious consonant, to stretch and divide the two vowels with two different syllables."

* "It is well known that the Erse dialect of the Gaelic was never written nor printed until Mr. Macfarlane, late minister of Killinvir, in Argyleshire, published, in 1754, a translation of Baxter's 'Call to the Unconverted.'"—*Shaw's Enquiry, &c.* The author of the "Claims of Ossian," also, asserts that, "till within these thirty years, the Caledonians had never possessed so much as the skeleton of a national grammar."

† Lingua enim Hibernica qua incolæ Hiberniæ et Albaniæ nunc vulgo utuntur in pluribus diversa est ab antiqua; et cum id in Codicibus scriptis pateat, quis nisi fatuis studiis abreptus non percipit, diversitatem

When so signal a change has been operated in the Irish language, during this period, in spite of the standard maintained, through a considerable portion of it, by a regular succession of public annalists, as well as by the writings of native legendaries and bards, it seems fair to conclude, that, if left without any such safeguards, and in the state of barbarism their absence would imply, the general speech of the people must, in time, have degenerated into a mere vague jargon, retaining but little trace of those features of relationship towards some of the most polished tongues of Europe, which induced the great Leibnitz to recommend a diligent study of the Irish language as highly conducive, in his opinion, to the knowledge and promotion of Celtic literature.*

With respect to the medium through which the Irish may be supposed to have early received the knowledge of letters, it might be sufficient to point to Gaul as the not improbable region from whence the British, as well as the Irish Druids, may have been furnished with the gift. That the use of letters was known to the Gauls, the whole context of Cæsar's remarks on the subject proves. The single sentence, indeed, where he states that the Druids forbade their doctrines to be committed to writing, fully suffices to prove this art to have been already introduced into the country ; the very circumstance of its being prohibited clearly implying its pre-existence. For all the ordinary purposes of life, they made use, adds Cæsar, of the Greek letters; and these they derived, it is supposed, from the Greek colonies established at Marseilles. We have already seen, and also on Cæsar's authority,

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longe majorem necessario oriri debere in lingua non scripta.—*Rer. Hibern. Script. Ep. nunc.*

The learned Colgan, in speaking of some poems ascribed to Dallan, an Irish bishop of the sixth century, declares them to have been written in so ancient a style as to be wholly unintelligible, even to many who were versed in the ancient idiom of the country : — " A multis alioquin in veteri patrio idiomate versatis nequeunt penetrari." (Quoted by Dr. O'Connor, Prol. ii. lxxiv.)

* Postremò, ad perficiendam, vel certe valdè promovendam literaturam Celticam, diligentius linguæ Hibernicæ studium adjungendum censeo. — *Collectan. Etymol.*, vol. i.

that to Britain, the cradle and school of Druidism, such Gaulish students as wished to perfect themselves in its mysteries, resorted. Without insisting any farther on the highly probable supposition, that the Magi or Druids of Ireland were, in reality, those instructors to whom the Gauls sent their youth to be initiated in the higher mysteries, and whose rites Pliny describes as so singularly resembling those of the Persians, there would be at least no violent degree of assumption in supposing such an intercourse to have early existed between the three countries, as might have been the means of supplying the Druids, both of Britain and Ireland, with that knowledge of letters so long possessed by their brethren of Gaul.

But there is still an earlier and, as far as Ireland is concerned, more obvious channel, through which this acquisition may have been derived by her people. Those who have accompanied the course of enquiry pursued in the foregoing pages may have seen reason to believe that the Irish, from their evident connection both with Phœnician and Carthaginian sources, were far more early and more directly, than even the Gauls themselves, in the way of receiving a gift so familiar to most of their Eastern visiters, and which, there are good grounds for supposing, was in those days much more extensively circulated, among at least the learned or sacred classes of all countries, than it has been the fashion of modern hypothesis to admit. How wholly improbable it is, that the Irish should not have been furnished with this important knowledge from the same nation that supplied, in a great part, their creed and their ritual, the names of their gods and festivals, of their sacred hills and promontories, has already, perhaps, been more than sufficiently urged. In those parts of Spain with which the Irish were most acquainted, the Phœnicians had, from the time of Moses, established themselves*; and, accordingly, letters

* Τους δε Φοινικας λεγω μηνυτας· και της Ιβηριας και της Λιβυης την αριστην ουτοι κατεσχον προ της ηλικιας Ομηρου.—*Strab.* lib. iii. However exaggerated may have been Strabo's hearsay account of the Turditani, who, he

are known to have flourished in those regions before the Romans were even in existence, as Romans themselves have acknowledged.* That an island situated in the very neighbourhood of such sources of civilisation, and so long connected, as it appears, with the people who were the great dispensers of the knowledge of letters in those days, should alone be excluded from an advantage enjoyed by all their other allies and dependencies, is a supposition far too improbable to be entertained.† When we add to all this, that, at the time when the Irish first broke forth, as scholars and missionaries, upon Europe, they were found in possession of modes of writing peculiar to themselves, of elements acknowledged to have no prototypes in any known language‡, and differing in name, number, and order from those of every other existing alphabet, — such a coincidence with all that we know of the early fortunes of the country, as well as with all that her own traditions lay claim to, forms a case assuredly in favour of those claims which is not to be easily controverted; while there is, on the other hand, but little more than the vague doubts and cavils of a no very liberal school of scepticism opposed to all this evidence.

It is thought that the Gauls, who, in the time of Cæsar, made use of the Greek letters derived from the colony of Marseilles, had possessed originally an alphabet of their own, which was then forgotten or

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tells us, were said to have been in possession of poems, laws in verse, and other written monuments of antiquity, for the space of six hundred years, such an extent of assertion would hardly have been without some foundation in fact. See, for the passage, his Third Book.

* In iis etiam regionibus, unde Scotorum originis cognitio eruenda est, nempe in occidentalibus Iberiæ partibus, a Phœnicibus, ab ipso Moysis ævo, habitatis, literas ante Romanorum tempora viguisse, ipsi Romani testantur. — *Rer. Hibern. Script. Ep. Nunc.*

† The same argument has been made use of by Astle against Wise, who held that the Egyptians were unacquainted with the use of letters. "As they had commercial intercourse," says this learned writer, "with their neighbours the Phœnicians, they probably had the knowledge of letters."

‡ "It follows, therefore, that, as there was no prototype to copy them (the Irish alphabets) from, they must be original." — *Harris on Ware*, chap. iii.

superseded by that of the Greeks*; and a similar fate seems to have attended the ancient alphabet of the Irish, as the letters adopted by them, after the mission of St. Patrick, though differing widely, as we have seen, from the Roman, in number, order, and power, bear a considerable degree of resemblance to them in shape. This, combined with the pains St. Patrick is known to have taken to introduce among them the Roman characters, warrants the conclusion, that his efforts had thus far succeeded, and that, though unable to persuade them to adopt the additional letters, or to depart from the order of their own ancient Bethluisnon, he prevailed in inducing them to attempt those rude imitations of the Roman characters which their present alphabet exhibits, and which are acknowledged to have been, not long after, adopted from them by the Saxons. †

From the near resemblance which some Irish words, implying a knowledge of letters, such as a book, to read, to write, &c., bear to the Latin terms for the same objects and operations, it has been hastily concluded that the Romans must have first introduced these words, and accordingly that the art to which they refer must have been also previously unknown. ‡ But besides that to seek the source of Celtic words in the Latin, is wholly to reverse the natural course of derivation, it might just as reasonably, on the same grounds, be concluded, that the Irish were indebted to the Romans for their first knowledge of the natural relationships of father and mother, since the words employed in the Latin and Irish to express these relations are no less evidently of a cognate origin. §

* "The Gauls, in particular, had evidently lost the use of their original alphabet."—*Whitaker, Hist. of Manchester*, book i. chap. 10. sect. 6.

† Anglo-Saxones rationem formandi literas accepisse ab Hibernis, cum eodem plane charactere usi fuerit qui hodie Hibernis est in usu.—*Camden.*

‡ This was first suggested, I think, by Innes, *Crit. Essay*, &c. vol ii. sect. 2.; and Mr. Turner, in his valuable history, has condescended to follow in the same track. Innes adduces a similar reason for supposing that the ancient Irish were unacquainted with the art of numbering. See on this subject Dr. Pritchard's satisfactory work, *The Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations*; particularly chap. iii. where he adduces proofs of a common origin in the vocabulary of the Celtic and other Indo-European languages.

§ In writing these sentences, I was little aware that the case which I

An ingenious Englishman, General Vallancey, accustomed to follow with far more zeal than judgment that clue to Ireland's antiquities which their manifest connection with Phœnician sources supplies, has gone so far, it is well known, as to persuade himself that in certain speeches, professing to be Punic, which are put by Plautus into the mouth of one of his dramatic personages, he could discover genuine Irish. The casual coincidences he has pointed out between several Irish words and the corrupt jargon, as it is most probably, which Plautus produces as Punic, are certainly curious and imposing; and more than one writer of high authority, on such subjects, have lent their sanction to the supposed discovery.* The learned antiquary, however, would, in his ardour, prove too much; and, paradoxical as the assertion may appear, the more completely his pretended case is made out, the more improbable it becomes: since, to produce so close a conformity between the Phœnician and the Irish, as,

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here but contemplated had actually occurred; and that, already, on the grounds above stated, it had been sapiently concluded that the ordinary relationship of father, mother, brother, &c., were unknown to the ancient Irish. — "Close as the relation was," says Mr. Wood, "between a son and his parents, brothers, and sisters, there are no words in the Celtic language distinct from those which appear to be derivations from the Latin language, and express this consanguinity. Thus *athair*, a father, seems to be derived from *pater*; *mathair*, a mother, from *mater*; *brathair*, a brother, from *frater*; *siur*, a sister, from *soror*. This opinion, which was formed from the affinity observable between the derivations and the Latin, is strengthened not only by the general mode of this uncultivated family (the Celts), but by the promiscuous intercourse which subsisted," &c.—*Inquiry*, &c.

* Lord Rosse (*Defence of ancient Ireland*) and sir William Betham; — the latter a practised Irish scholar. See his *Gael and Cymbri*.

In some instances the Punic of Plautus and the Irish confronted with it by Vallancey are almost identical, as will be seen by the following specimen: —

PLAUTUS.

Byth lym mo thym noctothii nel ech an ti daisc machon
Ys i de lebrim thyfe lyth chy lys chon temlyph ula.

IRISH.

Beth liom! mo thime noctaithe, niel ach an ti daisic mac coinne
Is i de leabhraim tafach leith, chi lis con teampluibh ulla.

See, for the rest, Vallancey's Irish Grammar.

It appears, from a late disclosure (See *Hardiman's Irish Minstrelsy*, Introduction), that this curious discovery of Irish in Plautus, by which Vallancey gained so much celebrity, is, after all, not his own, but was borrowed, without any acknowledgment, from a manuscript which came, by accident, into his hands.

in his zeal, he has endeavoured to make appear, it would have been necessary, in the first place, that the Punic language should have undergone no considerable change during the six centuries that elapsed from the foundation of Carthage till the time when Plautus wrote; and that, in the next place, Ireland herself should not only have been colonised directly from Carthage, but have retained the language, through so many centuries, little altered from its first source.* But the mere statement of such an hypothesis is a sufficient exposure of its absurdity. That process of corruption by which the primitive language, or languages of Europe, came to be broken up into so great a variety of dialects has continued to operate with the same rapidity ever since, till not only have the different nations, at this day, all distinct tongues, but even the early form of each of these tongues has become, in the course of a few centuries, wholly unintelligible to the direct descendants of those who first wrote and spoke it. Even in ancient times, so widely had some of the Celtic nations already departed from their common language, that, as appears from Polybius, it was only through the medium of an interpreter that the Carthaginians, in the time of Hannibal, could hold communication with the Gauls.

In their prohibition of the use of letters, as a means of communicating instruction, lay the essential point of difference between the Gaulish and Irish Druids. The declared principle upon which the former abstained from recording their science — a principle held by them, we know, in common with most of the sages of antiquity — was, that Memory being the great living depositary of knowledge, it was to be feared that, if once accustomed to consign her treasures to writing, she might feel absolved from the high trust, and, by degrees, relax in her guardianship of the precious stores committed to

* Lord Rosse, Defence of Ireland.

her.* That, on this speculative point, the Irish Magi differed from the Druids of Gaul, is proved by their possession, as we have seen, of a secret form of writing, expressly designed at once to transmit the sacred learning to their successors, and yet effectually conceal it from the inquisitive eyes of the profane.

Wherever the worship of the heavenly bodies has prevailed, there astronomy, as the natural handmaid of such a religion, has been found likewise to flourish; and the Phœnicians, the great sun-worshippers of antiquity, were also the greatest astronomers.† The skill of the Irish Druids in this science would seem, in one very important particular, to have outgone that of their brethren of Gaul, who measured the year, as we collect from Pliny, but by lunations, or revolutions of the moon, whereas the Irish appear to have attained some glimmering notion of the mode of reconciling, by the means of intercalary days, the difference between the lunar and solar year. This, they are alleged to have effected by adding to the 360 days, of which the twelve lunations consisted, five days and a quarter of the period annually devoted by them to the celebration of their ancient Taltine Games.†

The very custom, indeed, of a great annual festival existing, for any time, among a people, would seem,

* See a remarkable passage, in the Phædrus of Plato, of which the above is the substance, where the god Thoth is represented as recommending his invention of letters to a king of Egypt, and is answered, in a strain of acute observation, by the king. Whatever may be thought of the soundness of his arguments, as directed against all use of letters whatsoever, to a very general diffusion of that gift they will be found, I fear, but too applicable. "It would lead men," says the king, "to a sort of false and useless learning, teaching them opinions, not truth — Σοφιας δε τοις μαθεταις δοξαν ουκ αληθειαν ποιξεις — the natural consequence of which is, that they will become opinionated, not wise—Δοξοσοφοι αντι σοφων."

† "That which hath given the Sabians the greatest credit among the people of the East is, that the best of their astronomers have been of this sect; for the stars being the gods they worshipped, they made them the chief subject of their studies."—*Prideaux's Connection*, book iii. part i.

‡ Quemadmodum in nostro Civili Computo, annus, universali consensu, constat diebus tantum 365, excepto quovis anno quarto seu Bissextili dierum 366, sic etiam apud Druidos Hibernos invaluisse assero artem, qua Ludos Taltinios ad Solstitia, expletis Lunationibus 12 accommodabant, quinque dies cum quadrante addentes anno Lunari dierum 360, ut popularum annum adimplerent.—*Rer. Hibern. Script. Prol.* 1, 34.

of itself, to imply that, in regulating the length of their year, they employed some more certain measure than the revolutions of the moon; since otherwise, the same confusion must, in time, have arisen, on the recurrence of such a festival, as provoked the ridicule of Aristophanes against the calendar of the Greeks. But, among the Irish, there appear to have been observed, at least, three annual festivals, each marking one of those *Raths*, or quarters, into which their year was divided. Beginning the year, in the manner of the Persians, at the Vernal Equinox, they then solemnised their great Fire Feast, La Bealtinne; and the second Rath, which commenced at the Summer Solstice, and was called the Course, or Season of Gaiety, they signalised by the celebration of the Taltine Games, or Sports. In three months after were performed, in the Field of Howling, those dreadful sacrifices, of which mention has already been made, and by which the opening of the third Rath, or Autumnal Equinox, was commemorated.* The three remaining months of the year, unmarked, as far as appears, by any periodical solemnity, except the usual lighting up of fires on the high places, constituted the fourth Rath, or quarter.

The degree of knowledge as to the equinoctial and solstitial points, which this division of the twelve months seems to imply, would incline us to believe, that the ancient Irish were not entirely unacquainted with that first approach to a correct measure of time, the luni-solar year; and some of the terms employed, in their language, on the subject, tend to confirm this view. Thus, the year was called by them Bel-ain, or the Circle of the Sun, while the Zodiac they named Beach-Grian, or the Revolution of the Sun; and the Solstices were termed Grian-stad, or the Sun's stopping-places. It has been conjectured, and with much probability, that the stone circles of the Druids were employed no less as rude observatories than as places of judicature and worship;

* Rer. Hibern. Script. Ep. Nunc.

and the position, in most of them, of the great perpendicular stones, of which some, it is said, are placed generally in or near the meridian of the spot, while others are as carefully stationed to the right or left of the centre *, would seem to indicate, in their construction, some view to astronomical purposes.† It is remarked, too, that they are situated chiefly on eminences commanding an extensive range of horizon; and a circle thus placed, in Merionethshire, is called Cerig Brudyn, or the Astronomer's Stones, or Circle.‡ A similar monument, bearing much the same designation, is described by antiquaries as existing near Dundalk.

In addition to this and other remains, supposed to have been connected as well with astronomy as with religion, the ancient Irish had also their Round Towers, or Fire Temples, which appear to have been applied to the same double purpose. It is, indeed, highly probable, from the name "Celestial Indexes" affixed to them by the chroniclers, that one of the chief uses of these structures was to stand as gigantic gnomons, and by their shadows measure, from solstice to solstice, the gradual increase and decrease of the day.

From a passage which occurs in an old life of Moctheus, the first Bishop of Louth §, it has been conjectured that the division of time, by the week or cycle of seven days, was not unknown to the Pagan Irish; and if there be any good grounds for such a notion, it affords an additional confirmation of the very early origin

* King's Munimenta Antiqua, vol. i.

† For the same purpose, it would appear that upright stones and rocks were employed by the Goths and Sueons. "They have no use," says Olaus, "of sun-dials, but they use only the high stones of rocks that are placed partly by nature, partly by cunning, that by an infallible conjecture do overshadow the sunbeams and distinguish the parts of the day." — *Olaus Magnus*, book i. chap. 19.

In the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. xiv., may be found an account of a remarkable old building on the north side of Kenmare river, called Staigne Fort, and supposed, by Mr. Nimmo, to have been originally intended for an observatory. See his reasons annexed to the essay. — "It appeared to me," he says, "that the structure exhibited a sort of rude graduation of the horizon."

‡ "There is also, in Ireland," says King, "an astronomer's hill belonging to the Druids, called Carrick Edmond, which cannot but remind us of the Kerrig Edris in Wales."

§ Peractis vero, ut moris erat Gentilium, diebus septem exequiarum.

claimed for Druidism; since it appears, that soon after the lapse of mankind into idolatry, the observance of the Mundane week fell every where into disuse, excepting only among the family of Abraham, by whom it was faithfully preserved, and from them transmitted down through the descendants of Ishmael to the Mahometans.*

CHAP. V.

POETIC, OR BARDIC, ACCOUNT OF THE EARLY INHABITANTS OF IRELAND.

So intermixed together are reality and fiction in the first records of most nations, and each, in passing through the medium of tradition, assumes so deceivingly the features of the other, that the attempt to distinguish between them is a task of no ordinary responsibility; more especially where national vanity has become interested in the result; or where, as in the case of Ireland, a far deeper feeling of wounded pride seeks relief from the sense of present humiliation and suffering, in such indistinct dreams of former glory.

* This view of the history of the Sabbatical institution may be found argued at some length, and upon apparently solid grounds, by a commentator on Pliny, lib. xvi. c. 95. (Valpy's Edition). This writer, however, denies that the Druids were acquainted with the hebdomadal cycle. "Quod hic obiter annotandum est, mirum profecto nullum apud Romanos Græcosve vel hos etiam Druidos, hebdomadarum usum fuisse. Cyclum scilicet septem dierum Deum ipsummet habet auctorem: sed Abrahæ temporibus neglectus ab hominibus quia essent in idololatriam omnes fere prolapsi. Sola hunc servavit Abrahæ domus: et mos solis Abrahæ posteris est cognitus."

According to one of Whitaker's etymological conjectures, not only did the British Druids observe the cycle of seven days, but the name Sabaith, he thinks, was likewise given by them to their Sunday, or Day of the Sun, though bearing an entirely different meaning from that of the Sabbath of the Jews; "and it was in order," he says, "to take advantage of this accidental coincidence, that the Jewish Sabbath was transferred by the Christians to the Druidical Sunday."—*Celtic Vocabulary*, p. 94.

As the earliest chroniclers, too, of most countries, have been poets, the duty of stripping off those decorations and disguises in which matter of fact comes frequently arrayed from such hands, is, in general, the first the historian is called upon to perform; and often, in attempting to construct truth out of materials so shadowy, History has become but the interpreter of the dreams of Poesy. By this process it is that the fanciful fictions of Greece and of Egypt have been resolved into real records of human personages and events; and even their Gods dislodged from their high station, have been brought back by history to the humble earth from whence they sprung. Far different, however, from the mythic traditions of these classical nations are the dry memorials of past adventures and personages which our native historians have handed down; and while to the Greeks belonged the power of throwing gracefully the veil of fiction over reality, the Bardic Historians may lay claim to the very different merit of lending to the wildest and most extravagant fictions the sober lineaments of fact.

Respecting the degree of credit due to the early history of Ireland, two directly opposite opinions are entertained; — both equally, as in all such questions, removed from the fair medium of truth. While to some the accounts given by the Bardic writers of all that passed in the ancient Pagan times appear undeserving of any credit whatsoever, — their opinion being, that it is only with the dawn of the Christian faith in that country, that its history begins to assume any credible shape — there are others, on the contrary, who believe in all that flatters their feeling of national glory, surrendering their reason wilfully to the guidance of fanciful historians, who, by means of a deceptive system of chronology, have invested fable with much of the grave and authoritative aspect of history. Between these two extreme views of the subject, the over-sceptical and the credulous, a just medium may, as in most such cases, be found; and the true value of our

traditionary memorials be correctly ascertained, without either questioning indiscriminately their claims to credence with the one party, or going headlong into the adoption of all their fictions and extravagances with the other.

The publication, by Doctor O'Connor, the late reverend librarian of Stowe, of the Irish Chronicles, in their original language, accompanied by a Latin translation and explanatory notes, has, for the first time*, put the world in possession of the means of judging for itself of the truth and value of documents which had before only been known through the reports of modern Irish writers, conveyed in all the vagueness of allusion and mist of paraphrase.

To the real importance of these records, which differ wholly, in form, matter, and authenticity, from those compilations of the middle ages of which mention has just been made, there will occur, in the course of this work, opportunities of more particularly adverting. Our business, at present, as well with them as with the other class of documents alluded to, which, though branching out so extravagantly into fable, have often their roots laid deep in traditional truth, must be to refer to them merely as repositories of the ancient traditions of the country, as retaining traces of those remote times to which no history reaches, and as, therefore, of use in the task imposed upon all enquirers into the first origin of a people,—that of seeking, through the dim vista of tradition, some glimmerings of truth. And even here, in this obscure region of research, it is far less in the actual events related by the Bards and Seanachies, than in the absurdly remote period to which the first links of their chain of

* In the work of Keating, written originally in Irish, are embodied most of the old national traditions; but, besides that he has strung them together without any selection or judgment, and but seldom attempts to discriminate between the record of the annalist and the fable of the bard, his work has to answer, it seems, for even more than its own original extravagances, as some of the fictions that most disfigure it, and have most contributed to draw down ridicule on Irish history, are said to have been the fraudulent interpolations of his translator, Dermod O'Connor. The aptest description of Keating's book is that given by the clever and turbulent Peter Talbot, who pronounces it "Insigne plane, sed insanum opus."

tradition is carried, that any very insurmountable obstacle to our belief in most of their narratives lies: and this disposition to extend and elevate their antiquity, has marked the first imperfect attempts at chronology in all countries. Even among some whose history, in other respects, has received the authenticating sanction of ages, the same ambition is known to have prevailed. Thus, in the calculations of the Egyptians, the interval between two of their kings was made to occupy no less a period than 11,340 years; and yet that two such kings really existed, and were named Menes and Sethon, is accounted by no means the less probable or historical for this absurd flight of calculation; nor is it at all questioned, that under the serene skies of Chaldæa astronomy may have had its birth, because that people boasted of having made observations upon the stars through a period of 470,000 years.

So far back into the night of time have our Bardic Historians gone in quest of materials, that, from the very first age of the world, we find marked out by them a regular series of epochs, which have each been signalised by the visit of some new colony to their shores. Beginning a few weeks before the Flood, when, as they say, a niece of Noah, named Cesara, arrived with a colony of antediluvians upon the Irish coast*, they from thence number, through the lapse of ages, no less than five or six different bands of adventurers, by which the island, at various intervals, had been conquered and colonised.

To dwell, at any length, on the details of the earlier of these settlements,—details possessing neither the

* According to Bardic authorities cited by Keating, the arrivals in Ireland, before the deluge, were numerous; and, among other visitors, three daughters of Cain are mentioned. The famous White Book, so much ridiculed by some of the Scotch controversialists, is the authority cited for this story. See chapter headed "Of the first Invasion of Ireland before the Flood."

It is probable that for most, if not all, of the wild inventions respecting Partholan and the Nemedians, we are indebted to a poet or Seanachie of the tenth century, named Eochaidh O'Floinn, of whose numerous writings an account may be found in the Transactions of the Iberno-Celtic Society for 1820.

certainty of history, nor the attractiveness of fable, — can hardly be deemed necessary. Still so much of truth is occasionally intermixed with their fictions, and so many curious, if not important speculations, have arisen out of this period of Irish history, that to pass it over without some degree of notice, would be to leave the task attempted in these pages incomplete.

From the time of Cesara, who is allowed on all hands to have been a purely fabulous personage, there occurs no mention of any colony till about the beginning of the fourth century after the Flood, when Ireland was invaded, and taken possession of, by a chief, of the race of Japhet, named Partholan, who, landing at Imbersceine, in Kerry, says O'Flaherty, "the 14th day of May, on a Wednesday," fixed his residence in the province of Ulster, upon an island named Inis-Samer, in the river Erne. The fables related by the Irish bards respecting Partholan, — his faithless wife, her favourite greyhound, the seven lakes that burst forth after his arrival, — may all be found in the rhyming form that best suits them, in the marvellous pages of Keating. After holding possession of the country for three hundred years, the race of Partholan were all swept away by a plague; and the Hill of Howth, then called Ben-Heder, was the scene of the most awful ravages of this pestilence.

To this colony succeeded another about the time, it is said, of the patriarch Jacob, who were called, from the name of their leader, Nemedians, and are said to have come from the shores of the Euxine Sea. The fierce wars waged by this people with the Fomorians, a tribe of African sea-rovers, who then infested the coasts of Ireland, form one of the most picturesque subjects of the ancient Irish Muse. The stronghold of these African mariners, who are supposed, not improbably, to have been Carthaginian traders, was the Tower of Conan, which stood upon an island on the sea-coast of Ulster, named from this structure Tor-inis, or the Island of the Tower. This fortress the Nemedians stormed; and,

after dislodging from thence their formidable enemy, left not a trace of the mighty structure standing. An Irish poem called "The Storming of the Tower of Conan," still exists in the noble library of Stowe. The Fomorians, however, having been joined by fresh supplies of force, a general battle, by land and sea, ensued, in which the Africans were victorious, and the Nemedian colony being all dispersed and destroyed, the country was once more left at the mercy of those foreign marauders, and relapsed into wildness and desolation for the space of two hundred years.

The next, and, in number, the third, of these colonies, which was known to the Irish by the name of Fir-Bolgs, first imposed upon them, it is said, the yoke of regal authority, and dividing the island into five parts or provinces, established that pentarchal form of government, which continued, with but few interruptions, till the twelfth century of our era. The five sons of Dela, under whose command the colony had landed, shared the kingdom, according to this division, between them *, placing a stone in the centre of the island at the spot where their five shares met. Their tenure of royalty, however, was but short: for, not more than thirty or forty years had this quintuple sovereignty remained in their hands, when they were dispossessed by the Tuatha-de-Danaan, a people famed for necromancy, who, after sojourning for some time in Greece, where they had learned this mysterious art, proceeded from thence to Denmark and Norway, and became possessors, while in those countries, of certain marvellous treasures, among which were the Stone of Destiny, the sorcerer's spear, and the magic caldron. Armed with these wonderful gifts †, the tribe of the Danaans next found their way

* According to Hanmer's Chronicle there arose dissension between these brothers, and the youngest, Slainge, having, as Hanmer expresses it, "encroached round about the middle stone and fixed meare aforesaid," usurped at length the sole rule of the country.

† In one of the old Irish romances, on the subject of Finn Mac Comhal, that hero is imagined to have derived a portion of his knowledge from the waters of a certain magical fountain which was in the possession of the Tuatha-de-Danaan, and of which a single draught was sold for 300 ounces of gold.

to Scotland, and, after a rest there of some years, set sail, under the auspices of their chieftain, Nuad of the Silver Hand*, for Ireland. Here, landing secretly, under cover of a mist which their enchantments had raised, these sorcerers penetrated into the country, and had reached Sliabh an Iaruinn, the Mountain of Iron, between the lakes of Allen and Eirne, before their presence was discovered. The alarmed Belgians, thus taken by surprise, retreated before them rapidly into Connaught, where, at Moytura, on the borders of Lake Masg, that sanguinary battle took place, which, under the name of the Battle of the Field of the Tower, was long a favourite theme of Irish song.† Defeated signally by their invaders, the Belgians fled to the Isle of Man, North Aran‡, and the Hebrides, and the victorious Danaans became in their turn sole masters of the country.

In process of time, the Tuatha-de-Danaan were themselves dispossessed of their sway; a successful invasion from the coast of Spain having put an end to the Danaanian dynasty, and transferred the sceptre into the hands of that Milesian or Scotic race, which, through so long a series of succeeding ages, supplied Ireland with her kings. This celebrated colony, though coming directly from Spain, was originally, we are told, of

* So called from an artificial silver hand, which he wore to supply the loss sustained from a wound he received in the battle of Moytura. We are told seriously by O'Flaherty, that "Cred, a goldsmith, formed the hand, and Miach, the son of Dian Kect, well instructed in the practical parts of chirurgery, set the arm!"—*Ogygia*, part iii. ch. 10.

One of the grandsons of this Nuad, named Britannus, or Maol Briotan, is said to have passed over, after their defeat, into North Britain; and from him, according to the Psalter of Cashel, the Britons derived their origin. To this tradition Camden alludes, in a note on his Introduction,—"Britannia dicta est a quodam qui vocabatur Britannus." There is also another of the grandsons of Nuad, named Simon Breac, who is made to play a distinguished part in the Scotch version of our Milesian story; being represented therein as the importer of the famous Stone of Destiny, and even substituted, in place of Heremon, as the founder of the Milesian monarchy. (*Fordun*, l i. c. 26. See also *Stillingfleet's Origin. Britan.* cap. 5.) The Scotch antiquarians, however, seem to have confounded this primitive Simon Breac, with another of the same name, also grandson of a king Nuad, who flourished four centuries later. See Innes, vol. ii. sect. 2.

† There are, in the library of Stowe, says Dr. O'Connor, no less than five metrical chronicles, in which this battle of Moytura is commemorated. —*Rer. Hibern. Script. Prol.* ii. 37.

‡ See Sketch of the History and Antiquities of the Southern Isles of Aran, by John T. O'Flaherty, Trans. of Royal Irish Academy, vol. xiv.

Scythic race, and its various migrations and adventures, before reaching its Isle of Destiny in the West, are detailed by our Bards, with all that fond and lingering minuteness in which fancy, playing with its own creations, so much delights to indulge. Grafting upon this Scythic colony the traditional traces and stories of their country, respecting the Phœnicians, they have contrived to collect together, without much regard to either chronology, history, or geography, every circumstance that could tend to dignify and add lustre to such an event; —an event upon which not only the rank of their country itself in the heraldry of nations depended, but in which every individual, entitled by his Milesian blood to lay claim to a share in so glorious a pedigree, was interested. In order more completely to identify the ancestors of these Scythic colonists with the Phœnicians, they relate that by one of them, named Fenius, to whom the invention of the Ogham character is attributed, an academy for languages was instituted upon the Plain of Shenaar, in which that purest dialect of the Irish, called the Bearla Feini, was cultivated.

From thence tracing this chosen race in their migrations to different countries, and connecting them, by marriage or friendship, during their long sojourn in Egypt, with most of the heroes of Scripture history, our Bards conduct them at length, by a route, not very intelligible, to Spain. There, by their valour and enterprise, they succeed in liberating the country from its Gothic invaders *, and, in a short time, make themselves masters of almost the whole kingdom. Still haunted, however, in the midst of their glory, by the remembrance of a prophecy, which had declared that an island in the Western Sea was to be their ultimate place of rest, the two sons of their great leader, Mile-

* We have here a specimen of that art of annihilating both space and time which is so prodigally exhibited throughout the Milesian story. Among the many different nations that in succession became masters of Spain, the occupation of that kingdom by the Goths, which is here assumed as having taken place in the remote Milesian times, did not really occur till about the beginning of the fifth century of our era.

sius, at length fitted out a grand martial expedition, and set sail, in thirty ships, from the coast of Gallicia for Ireland. According to the Bardic chronology, 1300 years before the birth of Christ, but according to Nennius, Ængus *, and others, near five centuries later, this "lettered and martial colony," (to use the language of one of its most zealous champions †), arrived, under the command of the sons of Milesius, on the Irish coasts; and having effected a landing at Inbher Sceine, the present Bantry Bay, on Thursday, the first of May, A. M. 2934 ‡, achieved that great and memorable victory over the Tuatha-de-Danaan §, which secured to themselves and their princely descendants, for more than 2000 years, the supreme dominion over all Ireland.

* *Psalter-na-Rann.* Ængus is here referred to merely as the putative author of this work, a high authority having pronounced that there are no grounds for attributing it to him. (Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. iii. c. 20.) The very nature, indeed, of some of the contents of this Psalter, if, as bishop Nicholson asserts, it contains a catalogue of the kings of Ireland, from Heremon down to Brian Boroimhe, who was slain in 1014, shows that it could not have been the production of a writer of the eighth century.

† *Dissertations on Irish History*, sect. 21.

‡ *Ogygia*, part iii. ch. 16. O'Flaherty has here reduced, it will be observed, the calculation of the Bards, and computes the date of this landing to have been only a thousand years before our era; while Keating adheres to the authority of the Psalter of Cashel, in fixing it three centuries earlier. The author of *Dissertations on the History of Ireland* (as I shall henceforth designate Mr. O'Connor of Belanagare, in order to distinguish him from his reverend descendant, the late librarian of Stowe,) at first adopted the calculation of O'Flaherty, but saw reason afterwards to abate near five centuries of that date (see *Ogyg. Vindic.*, preface; also *Reflections on History of Ireland*, Collectan. no. 10.); and Dr. O'Connor is content to refer the coming of the Milesians to the year before Christ 489. (*Rer. Hibern. Script. Prol.* ii. 45.) The most extravagant, however, of all the computations of this event is that made by Donald O'Neil, a king of Ulster, who writing, in the year 1317, to pope John XXII., assures his holiness that the Milesian colony settled in Ireland about 2300 years before the Christian era. See Fordun (*Scotichron.*), to whom we must trust for the authenticity of this curious document. It is also quoted, but without reference to any authority, by Usher, *Eccles. Antiquitat.* c. 16. In endeavouring to fix the period of the Argonautic expedition, the learned author of *The Remains of Japhet* comes gravely to the conclusion that it must have been about the same number of years from the flood as the beginning of the reign of the Milesians; and adds, "so that if Jason did sail to Ireland, it must have been soon after the establishment of the Milesians in that kingdom."

§ The fondness of the Irish for their old national traditions is shown in the names given to remarkable places throughout the country, most of which may be traced to some famous hero or heroine, commemorated in ancient songs and tales. Even the shore on which the antediluvian nymph, Cesara, was said to have been buried, used to be pointed out, in the days of Giraldus, with reverence. (*Topog. Dist.* 3. c. 1.) Memorials, in like manner, of the great battle between the Milesians and the Tuatha-de-Danaan were preserved for ages on the spot where that combat is said to have oc-

CHAP. VI.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE COLONISATION OF IRELAND.

When stripped of their fanciful dates, and reduced within due bounds of antiquity, these traditions of the first settlements in Ireland, however fabulously coloured, may be taken as preserving the memory of some of those early invasions, of which, in times when the migratory spirit was alive over the whole earth, this island must frequently have been the object. The story of a colony, in remote ages, under a chieftain of the race of Japhet, falls in with the hypothesis of those who, in tracing westward the migration of the Noachidæ, include both Britain and Ireland among those Isles of the Gentiles * which became, on the partition of the earth, the appanage of the descendants of Japhet. The derivation of a later settlement, the Nemedians, from some country near the Euxine Sea, coincides no less aptly with the general current of European tradition, according to which the regions in the neighbourhood of the Caucasian mountains are to be regarded as the main source of the population of the West. †

We have shown it to be probable, as well from foreign as from native tradition, that Ireland derived her

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curred. Not only of the chieftains, but of the ladies and druids who fell in the fight, the names were associated with the valleys and hills in that neighbourhood. An old poem on the Battle of Sliabh-Mis is referred to by Smith (*History of Kerry*), who adds that "the monumental stones said, in the above poem, to have been erected over the graves of the noble warriors, are still remaining on Mount Cahirconree, one of the Sliabhmis mountains in Kerry."

* The first language spoken in Europe, says Parsons, was the Japhetan, called afterwards the Pelasgian; "and this language," he asserts, "is now to be found only in Ireland, the Highlands of Scotland, and Wales." According to the Chronicle of the Celtic Kings, Japhet was the first British monarch. See Sammes, chap. 10.

† See Sir William Jones's Sixth Discourse, *On the Persians.*

primitive population from Spain. The language brought by these first settlers was that which was common then to all the Celts of Europe. Those Spanish colonies, therefore, placed by Ptolemy on the south and south-western coasts of Ireland, must have arrived there at some much later period, when the dialect of the Celtic anciently spoken in Spain had become corrupted by mixture with other tongues; as it is plainly from these later Spanish settlers must have flowed that infusion into the Irish language of a number of Basque or Cantabrian words, which induced the learned antiquary, Edward Lhuyd, to imagine a degree of affinity between these tongues.*

In the direction of Spain, it is most likely, whatever of foreign commerce or intercourse the ancient Irish may have possessed, was, down to a comparatively recent period, maintained. The description given, indeed, by a poet of our own days, of the geographical position of Ireland, as standing "with her back turned to Europe, her face to the West," is far more applicable to the state of her political and commercial relations in those times of which we are speaking. Wholly withdrawn from the rest of Europe, her resort lay along the shores of the Atlantic alone; and that commerce which frequented her ports in the first century of our era, was maintained, not certainly with the Romans, to whom she was then and for ages after unknown, but with Iberian merchants most probably, and with those descendants of the ancient Phœnician settlers who inhabited the western coasts of Spain.

* "As by collating the languages I have found one part of the Irish reconcileable to the Welsh, so, by a diligent perusal of the New Testament and some manuscript papers I received from the learned Dr. Edward Brown, written in the language of the Cantabrians, I have had a satisfactory knowledge as to the affinity of the other part with the old Spanish."—*Preface to Lhuyd's Glossography.* The attempt to prove this alleged affinity is admitted to have been an utter failure; the instances of resemblance between the two languages being no greater than may be satisfactorily accounted for by such engraftments on the original speech of a country as foreign colonies are always sure to introduce. See Baxter, on the word *Ibernia*, where he has allowed himself to be misled by this false notion of Lhuyd into some very erroneous speculations.

A remark above applied to the Spanish colonisation, will be found applicable also to the colonies from Gaul. Whatever share may have been contributed by that country to the first Celtic population of Ireland, it was not till a much later period, most probably, that the Gaulish colonies, named by Ptolemy, established themselves in the island. The people called Fir-Bolgs by the Bards were, it is evident, Belgæ, of the same race with those in Britain; but at what period they fixed themselves in either country, and whether those who took possession of Ireland were derived mediately through Britain, or direct from Belgic Gaul, are questions that must still remain open to conjecture. The Menapii and the Cauci, both nations of the Belgic coast*, came directly, it is most probable, to Ireland, as there is no trace of them to be found in Britain, — the town of Menapia in Wales having been founded, it is thought, by the Irish Menapii.† In the Bardic historians, we find a romantic account of a monarch, named Labhra Longseach, who having been exiled, in his youth, to Gaul, returned from thence at the head of a Gaulish colony ‡, which he established in the regions now known as the counties of Wicklow and Wexford. This site of the settlement corresponds exactly, as will be seen, with the district assigned by Ptolemy to the Menapii; and, in further confirmation both of the tradition and of this geographer's accuracy,

* "Both these nations," says the monk Richard, "were undoubtedly of Teutonic origin, but it is not known at what period their ancestors passed over." Whitaker, however, who will allow no fact to stand in the way of his own hypothesis, with respect to the peopling of Ireland exclusively from Britain, deserts his favourite guide, Richard, on this point, and insists that the Menapii and the Cauci were not German, but British tribes. (Hist. of Manchester, book i. ch. 12. sect. 4.) Camden, Dr. O'Connor, Wood (*Enquiry into the Primitive Inhabitants of Ireland*), and other authorities, all pronounce these tribes to have been of German origin; as were, most probably, the neighbours of the Menapii, the Coriondi.

† "They must have come from Belgic Gaul and Germany, for we meet with no trace of them in Britain; Menapia in Wales being founded by the Irish Menapii."—Ledwich, *Antiquities*.

‡ From the long spears, called Laighean, with which the Gauls who accompanied this prince, were armed, the province of Leinster is said to have derived its ancient name of Coige-Laighean, or the Province of the Spears. See O'Halloran, vol. ii. ch. 6.

we find the old Irish name for the harbour which these foreigners first entered to have been Loch Garman, or the harbour of the Germans.

In that maze of uncertainty and confusion which, notwithstanding all that has been written upon the subject, continues to perplex the enquiries of the learned into the lineage of the different races of Europe, it remains still a contested question, whether the Belgæ were a Celtic or a Teutonic race.* In England, whose early history is so much involved in the decision, not merely as regards the origin and composition of her people, but also in all that relates to the formation of her language and the gradual rise of her institutions, the opinions hitherto advanced on the subject have been pretty equally balanced; and while, on the one side, Whitaker, Chalmers, and others, reinforced recently by the able concurrence of Dr. Pritchard †, have held the Belgæ to be of Celtic origin, several distinguished writers, on the other hand, among whom is the author of the learned Enquiry into the Rise of the English Com-

* The cause of this confusion, which has arisen principally from the intermixture of the Germans and Gauls, by reciprocal colonisation, is well stated by a writer in the Mémoires de l'Academie, tom. xviii. "Il est sur que les Celtes et les Germains, étoient deux nations différentes, ... mais les colonies qui avoient passé du midi, ou de la Gaule, dans la Germanie, et celles qui étoient descendus de la Germanie dans la Gaule, les avoient extrêmement mélées, et je ne doute pas qu'il ne fallût une certaine attention pour démêler les différences qui les distinguoient." Pinkerton, also, has given an explanation, perhaps still more satisfactory, of the origin of this confusion between the races: — "As the Celts had anciently possessed all Gaul, their name was continued by some, and by the distant Greek writers especially, to all the Gauls: though the Belgæ and Aquitani, the Galli Braccati, and others, or the far greater part of the Gauls, were not Celts, but the expellers of the Celts. The case is the same as that of the English, who are called Britons, not as being old Britons, but as expellers of those Britons, and as living in Britain."— *Dissertation on the Scythians or Goths*, part ii. ch. 4.

† *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind.* One of the reasons alleged by this writer, for supposing the Belgic to have been akin to the Erse is, that "several names of persons and places in those parts of South Britain which were probably occupied by Belgic people, belong, according to their orthography, to the Erse, and not to the Cambro-Celtic dialect." But the real solution of the difficulty here stated is to be found in the fact demonstrated by Lhuyd and others, that the primitive possessors of the country now called Wales were a race speaking a dialect of the Erse, or Irish, and that from them, not from the Belgæ, the permanent features of the country derived their names.

monwealth *, have, as it appears to me, on far more tenable grounds, both of reasoning and authority, pronounced this people to have been of purely Teutonic descent. With respect to Ireland, the term Scythic, applied to the Belgic colony, leads to the inference that they were there held to be a northern or Gothic race; and that their language must have been different from that of the Celtic natives, appears from the notice taken in the Book of Lecane †, of a particular form of speech known by the name of the Belgaid.

The Tuatha-de-Danaans, by whom the Belgæ were, as we have seen, defeated and supplanted, are thought by some to have been a branch of the Damnonians of Cornwall; while others, more consistently with tradition, derive their origin from those Damnii of North Britain, who inhabited the districts in the neighbourhood of the river Dee and the Frith of Clyde. ‡ Of the historical verity of these two colonies, the Fir-Bolgs and Danaans, no doubt can be entertained; as down to a period within the fair compass of history, the former were still a powerful people in Connaught, having, on more than one important occasion, distinguished themselves in the intestine commotions of the country; and the famous Goll, the son of Morni,

* "The main body of the population of England is derived from the Belgic nation, one of the three great families into which the Teutones are divided." — *Sir F. Palgrave's Rise and Progress of the English Commonwealth*, vol. i. ch. 2. See, also, for curious remarks upon the affinity between the Frisic and Anglo-Saxon languages (the former being, it is there said, the least altered branch of the Belgic), Ed. Rev. vol. iii. art. 1.— Nor must the acute, though dogmatic, Pinkerton be forgotten among the supporters of the Gothic origin of the Belgæ. See *Dissert. on the Goths*, part ii. ch. 3., where, in addition to his own opinion and authority, he adds the following in a note: — "Paul Merula, in his Cosmographia, seems to be the first who saw that the ancient Belgæ, on account of their German origin, spoke the Gothic tongue; and his reasons to prove it (pars i. lib. 3.) cannot be answered."

† As quoted by Wood (*Enquiry into the Primitive Inhabitants*, &c.) — This writer, who follows Pinkerton in supposing the Belgæ to have been the Scots, adopts also, of course, his opinion as to the former being Teutones. "The only inhabitants of Ireland (he says) who seem to have attracted the notice of British, Roman, and other foreign writers, were the enterprising Belgæ, whom, as Goths or Scythians, they denominated Scoti or Scuit."

‡ "From hence, perhaps, they borrowed the name of Tuath Dee; that is, a people living contiguous to the river Dee."—*Ogyg.*, part i.

one of the heroes of the Ossianic age, was said to be of the blood-royal of the Tuatha-de-Danaan princes.*

Among the tribes marked by Ptolemy in his map, a few suggest themselves as requiring particular notice. It was, as might be expected, in the south and south-western parts of Ireland, the region nearest to the coasts of Spain, that the tribes originating in that country were to be found. Thus the Iverni, whose chief city, according to Ptolemy, was Ivernis, or Hybernis, occupied, in addition to a portion of Cork, all that part of Kerry which lies between the Promontorium Austrinum, or Mizen Head, and the river, anciently called the Iernus, now the river Kenmare. We can have little doubt as to the source from whence the Iernus derived its name, when we find, on the north-west coast of Spain, another river Ierne, and also a promontory in its immediate neighbourhood, bearing the same name. The term thus applied signifies, in Celtic, *the uttermost point;* and in its appropriation thus successively to each of these places, we trace, by stages, as it were, the progress of Phœnician discovery in the west; the same name, which they who first reached the western coasts of Spain left as a mark of the uttermost bounds of their knowledge in that direction, having been afterwards, on the discovery of Ireland, transferred, in the same sense, to her shores.†

The Velabri, a people situated near Kerry Head,

* See Translation of an Ode, attributed to Goll, by O'Halloran, Transactions of Royal Irish Academy for the year 1788.

† "The reason which concludes me in the belief that Ireland took its name from the Phœnicians, is because in the uttermost coast of Spain, westward, is a promontory, called by Strabo, Ierne, and the river next to it is called by Mela Ierne; but when these islands were discovered, then Ireland took this name as the uttermost."—*Sammes, Britann. Antiq. Illust.* chap. 5. Though by Camden and several other writers, the authority of Strabo is, in like manner, referred to, for the existence of a Spanish promontory, called Ierne, there is, in reality, no such headland mentioned by that geographer. According to Hoffman, it was a mountain that was thus named (*Lexic. in voce*); and he also refers to Strabo, but, as far as I can find, with no better authority.

Similar to Sammes's derivation of the name Ierne, is that of Hibernia, as given by Bochart, who says that it signifies the last or most western dwelling-place. "Nihil aliud est quam *Iberniæ* ultima habitatio; quia ultra Hiberniam versus occasum veteres nihil noverant quam vastum mare."—*Geograph. Sac.* lib. xii. c. 39.

were also, it is supposed, of Spanish origin; while the Gangani (more properly Concani) and the Luceni *, tribes inhabiting near each other in Spain, continued also, after migration, to be near neighbours in Ireland; the Luceni having established themselves on the eastern side of the Shannon, while the Concani, from whom Connaught is said to have been named, fixed their station upon the western. The claims of the Brigantes to be accounted a Spanish colony, appear by no means so valid; though from the share assigned to this people in the romantic adventures of the Milesians, it becomes a point of importance with the believers in that story to establish their direct descent from Spain. According to the Bards, it was by Breoghan, the great ancestor of the Milesians, that their city Brigantia, near the site of the present Corunna, was built; and it was from the top, as they tell us, of a lofty light-house, or Pharos, erected on the Gallician coast, that Ith, the son of Breoghan, looking northward, one starry winter night, discovered, by means of a miraculous telescope, the isle of Eirin to which they were destined. It is added, that the descendants of these Spanish heroes were, to a late period, distinguished by the title of the Clan Breogan †, and that to them the name of Brigantes was applied by Ptolemy in his map. All this, however, plausibly as it may seem to be supported by the existence of an actual city named Brigantia ‡, in Gallicia, — the very region from whence most of the Spanish colonies were derived, — is

* "The Luceni of Ireland seem to derive their name and original from the Lucensii of Gallitia, in the opposite coast of Spain, of whose names some remains are to this day in the barony of Lixnaw." — *Camden.*

† *Dissertations on the History of Ireland*, chap. 13.

‡ On no other grounds did Florianus del Campo, an author mentioned by Camden, undertake to prove that the Brigantes of Britain were derived, through Ireland, from his own country, Spain. There is also an Essay, by Mons. le Brigant (published 1762), in which he professes to prove that they "were the most ancient inhabitants of Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, England, and of Ireland in part." Baxter had already given much the same account of them, deriving them originally from the ancient Phrygians. Availing himself, too, of a whimsical reading of Scaliger, who, in a passage of Seneca, converts "Scuto-Brigantes" into "Scoto-Brigantes," Baxter applies this latter name, throughout his work, to the Scots who colonised North Britain, choosing to consider them as a mixed race between the Brigantes of Britain, and the Irish. — *Glossar. Antiq.* passim.

but a creation evidently of the later national historians, founded upon the true and ancient traditions of a colonisation from the north-west of Spain.

The most probable account of the Brigantes is, that they were a branch of that powerful tribe of the same name in Britain, whose territories extended over no less than five of the present English counties, and who became the most potent and numerous people of all the ancient Britons.* On the strength of a mere conjecture, suggested by Camden †, the date of their migration into Ireland is fixed so late as the year of our era 76, when Petilius Cerealis was governor of Britain. But for this assumption there appears to be no historical authority whatsoever. The mention, indeed, of the Brigantes in Ptolemy's map of Ireland, where, as we have seen, only the more ancient of her tribes are marked down, sufficiently disproves the recent date thus assigned to their migration.

The Nagnatæ, a people inhabiting Connaught, and supposed to have contributed to the compound name of that province ‡, deserve to be peculiarly noticed on account of their chief city Nagnata, to which Ptolemy applies the epithet "eminent," or "illustrious §," and which is conjectured to have stood not far from the present Sligo. ‖ We find, also, among the towns enume-

* Brigantium civitatem, quæ numerosissima provinciæ totius perhibetur.—*Tacit. Agric.* c. 17.

† "If it may not be allowed that our Brigantes and those in Ireland had the same names, upon the same account, I had rather, with my learned friend Mr. Thomas Savil, conjecture that some of our Brigantes, with others of the British nations, retired into Ireland upon the coming over of the Romans; some for the sake of ease and quietness, others," &c. &c. On this point, Whitaker, and his follower, Wood, are, as usual, satisfied with the sole authority of the monk, Richard, whose words bear most suspiciously, I must say, the appearance of having been copied from the above passage of Camden:—"Nationes quæ cum vel ab hoste finitimo non daretur quies vel, &c. &c. in hanc terram trajecerunt." There are, indeed, strong grounds for suspecting that this pretended work of the monk of Cirencester, upon which Whitaker, Chalmers, Wood, and others, have founded so many speculations, was but a clever forgery of the last century, fabricated, it is probable, for the express purpose of imposing upon the learned but credulous Dr. Stukely, to whom the manuscript of it was so suspiciously transmitted.

‡ Compounded possibly, says Camden, of Concani and Nagnatæ.

§ Πολις επισημος.

‖ "I cannot discover," says Ware, "the least footsteps of a city so called, in all that tract of country,—so all devouring is Time!"—Chap. 6.

rated by this geographer, Eblana, or Deblana *, a city belonging to the tribe called the Eblanii, and placed by Ptolemy under the same parallel with the present Dublin.

Having touched briefly on all that appeared to me most worthy of observation among the earlier tribes and septs of Ireland, I shall now proceed to the consideration of that latest and most important of all her settlements, the Scythic, or Scotic, from whence the whole of her people in the course of time received the name of Scots, and retained it exclusively to so late a period as the tenth century of our era. † A sketch of the history of this colony, as contained in the Psalters and metrical records of the Bards, has been already given in the preceding chapter, and may be found at large in the work of Keating, which is drawn almost wholly from these romantic sources.

It is a task ungracious and painful, more especially to one accustomed from his early days to regard, through a poetic medium, the ancient fortunes of his country, to be obliged, at the stern call of historical truth, not only to surrender his own illusions on the subject, but to undertake also the invidious task of dispelling the dreams of others who have not the same imperative motives of duty or responsibility for disenchanting themselves of so agreeable an error. That the popular belief in this national tale should so long have been cherished and persevered in, can hardly be a subject of much wonder. So consolatory to the pride of a people for ever struggling against the fatality of their position has been the fondly imagined epoch of those old Milesian days, when, as they believe, the glory of arts and arms, and all the blessings of civilisation came in the train of their heroic ancestors from the coasts of

* Ita enim planè reponendum in Ptolemæo pro truncato Eblana. — *Baxter, Gloss. Antig. Britan.*

† Quod ut ante undecimum post Christi nativitatem seculum haud quaquàm factum, in fine præcedentis Capitis declaravimus; ita neminem qui toto antecedentium annorum spatio scripserit, produci posse arbitramur qui *Scotiæ* appellatione Albaniam unquam designaverit. — *Usher, De Britannic. Eccles. Primord.* cap. 16.

Spain, that hitherto none but the habitual revilers and depreciators of Ireland, the base scribes of a dominant party and sect, have ever thought of calling in question the authenticity of a legend to which a whole nation had long clung with retrospective pride, and which substituting, as it does, a mere phantom of glory for true historical fame, has served them so mournfully in place of real independence and greatness. Even in our own times, all the most intelligent of those writers who have treated of ancient Ireland, have each, in turn, adopted the tale of the Milesian colonisation, and lent all the aid of their learning and talent to elevate it into history.* But, even in their hands, the attempt has proved an utter failure; nor could any effort, indeed, of ingenuity succeed in reconciling the improbabilities of a story, which in no other point of view differs from the fictitious origins invented for their respective countries by Hunibald, Suffridus †, Geoffrey Monmouth, and others, than in having been somewhat more ingeniously put together by its inventors, and far more fondly persevered in by the imaginative people, whose love of high ancestry it flatters, and whose wounded pride it consoles.

In one respect, the traditional groundwork on which the fable is founded, may be accounted of some value to the historian, as proving the prevalence in the country itself of early traditions and remembrances respecting that connection with the coasts of Spain and the East,

* Lord Rosse (*Observations on the Bequest of Henry Flood*), Dr. O'Connor (*Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores Veteres*), and Mr. D'Alton, the able and well-informed author of the *Essay on Ancient Ireland*, are among the distinguished writers here alluded to as having graced, if not invigorated, this view of the question by their advocacy. To these has lately been added Sir William Betham, who, in his ingenious work, entitled "The Gael and the Cymbri," has shaped his hypothesis to the same popular belief.

† A fabricator of fictitious origins for the Frisons, as Hunibald was an inventor in the same line for the Franks; the latter founding his fictions professedly upon Druidical remains. According to Suffridus, the Frisons were in possession of an uninterrupted series of annals from the year 313 before Christ. "Itaque cum ab anno 313 ante natum Christum exordium sumant." — *De Orig. Fris.* See the Essay of M. du Rondeau, *Mém. de l'Acad. de Bruxelles*, art. second, 1773.

There is scarcely a nation, indeed, in Europe, which has not been provided thus with some false scheme of antiquity; and it is a fact, mournfully significant, that the Irish are now the only people among whom such visionary pretensions are still clung to with any trust.

which, as well from Punic as from Grecian authorities, we have shown that the Ierne of other ages must have maintained.

Had the Bards, in their account of the early settlements, so far followed the natural course of events as to place that colony which they wished to have considered as the original of the Irish people at the commencement instead of at the end of the series, we should have been spared, at least, those difficulties of chronology which at present beset the whole scheme. By making the Milesian settlement posterior in time to the Firbolgs and the Tuatha-de-Danaans, both the poetry and the reality of our early annals are alike disturbed from their true stations. The ideal colony, which ought to have been placed beyond the bounds of authentic record, where its inventors would have had free scope for their flights, has, on the contrary, been introduced among known personages and events, and compelled to adjust itself to the unpliant neighbourhood of facts; while, on the other hand, the authentic Belgæ and Damnii, accredited beings of history, have, by the interposition of this shadowy intruder, been separated, as it were, from the real world, and removed into distant regions of time where sober chronology would in vain attempt to reach them.*

It is true, the more moderate of the Milesian believers, on being made aware of these chronological difficulties, have surrendered the remote date at first assigned to the event, and, in general, content themselves with fixing it near 1000 years later. But this remove, besides that it exposes the shifting foundation on which the whole history rests, serves but to render its gross anachronisms and improbabilities still more glaring. A scheme of descent which traces the ancestors of the Irish, through a direct series of generations, not merely to the first founders of Phœnician arts and enterprise, but even to chieftains connected by friendship with the

* According to the calculation of the Bards, the arrival of the Belgæ must have been at least 1500 years before the Christian era.

prophet Moses himself *, had need of a remote station in time to lend even a colouring of probability to such pretensions. When brought near the daylight of modern history, and at the distance of nearly a thousand years from their pretended progenitors, it is plain these Milesian heroes at once shrink into mere shadows of fable; and, allowing them their fullest scope of antiquity, there appear no grounds for believing that the Scotic colony settled in Ireland at a remoter period than about two centuries before our era. That they succeeded the Firbolgs and Danaans in their occupation of the country, all its records and traditions agree; and the first arrival of the Belgic tribes in Ireland from the coasts of Britain, or even direct from Gaul, could hardly have been earlier than about the third or fourth century before Christ.

Another strong proof of the comparatively recent date of the Scotic colony, is the want of all trace of its existence in Ptolemy's map of Ireland †, where the entire omission of even the name of the Scoti among the tribes of that island, shows that, not merely to the Tyrian geographers, who chiefly drew up that map, was this designation of her people wholly unknown; but that, so late as the beginning of the second century, it had not yet reached the knowledge of Ptolemy himself. For this latter fact the state of seclusion in which Ireland had so long remained, — shut out, as she was, entirely from the circle of the Roman empire,— may be thought sufficiently, perhaps, to account; as well as for the equally certain fact, that not till towards the end of the third

* Among the memorable things related of Moses during his intercourse with the ancestors of the Irish, we are told of a prediction uttered by him to their chief Gadelius, that "wheresoever his posterity should remain or inhabit, serpents should have no power in that land to hurt either man or beast. And this prophecy is verified by Candia and Ireland; for in neither of those islands, as being inhabited by the Gadelians, it is manifest that serpents had any power as they have in any other countries."—M'Curtin's *Vindication of the Antiquity of Ireland*, copied chiefly from Keating.

† This fact is noticed by the geographer Cellarius, and the same conclusion deduced from it. After reviewing the other tribes of Ireland, he says, — "Hos populos Ptolemæus in Hibernia prodidit: nullos autem in illis recensuit Scotos, quod ideo posteriores, saltem nomen illorum, oportet in hac insula fuisse."—L. ii. c. 4.

century does there occur a single instance, in any writer, of the use of the term Scotia for Ireland, or of Scoti for any of her people.

But the most remarkable and, as it appears to me, decisive proof of the recent date of the Scotic settlement, still remains to be mentioned. We learn from the Confession of St. Patrick, a writing of acknowledged genuineness, that, so late as the life-time of that Saint, about the middle of the fifth century, the name of Scots had not yet extended to the whole of the Irish nation, but was still the distinctive appellation of only a particular portion of it.* It is, indeed, evident that those persons to whom St. Patrick applies the name of Scots, were all of the high and dominant class; whereas, in speaking of the great bulk of the people, he calls them Hiberionaces, — from the name Hiberione, which is always applied by him to the island itself. Such a state of things, — resembling that of the Franks in Gaul, when, although masters of the country, they had not yet imposed upon it their name, — shows clearly that the Scotic dynasty could not then have numbered

* Unde autem Hiberione, qui nunquam notitiam Dei habuerunt, nisi idola et immunda usque nunc semper coluerunt, quomodo nuper facta est plebs Domini et filii Dei nuncupantur? Filii Scottorum et filiæ Regulorum, monachi et virgines Christi esse videntur. Et etiam una benedicta Scotta, genitiva nobilis, pulcherrima, adulta erat, quam ego baptizavi. — *S. Patricii Confessio.*

This strong proof of the comparatively modern date of the Scotic settlement has not escaped the notice of unprejudiced enquirers into our antiquities. The Bollandists, Tillemont, Father Innes, and lately the learned historian of the Irish church, Dr. Lanigan, have all perceived and remarked upon the passage: the two latter showing how fatal to the dreams of Milesian antiquity must be considered the state of things disclosed in this authentic document. The nature and object of the valuable work of Dr. Lanigan were such as to lead him only to the consideration of our ecclesiastical antiquities; but the few remarks made by him upon the passage of St. Patrick's Confession just cited leave no doubt as to the view taken by his clear and manly intellect of that whole apparatus of pompous fable to which so many of the antiquaries of his country still lend their sanction. The result of his observations on the subject is, that "following the analogy usual in such cases, we may conclude that the invasion of Ireland by the Scots ought not to be referred to as high an antiquity as some of our historians have pretended: otherwise it would be very difficult to explain, how they could have been in our Saint's time considered as a nation distinct from the greater part of the people of Ireland." — *Ecclesiast. Hist. of Ireland*, vol. i. chap. 5. He adds afterwards, that "the Scots might have been 400 or 500 years in Ireland before the distinction of names between them and the other inhabitants totally ceased;" thus assigning even a later date for their arrival in the country than, it will be seen, I have allowed in the text.

many ages of duration; and that to date its commencement from about a century or two before the Christian era is to allow the fullest range of antiquity to which, with any semblance of probability, it can pretend.

Even when lightened thus of the machinery of fable, and of all its unfounded pretensions to antiquity, the Scotic settlement must still continue a subject of mystery and discussion from the state of darkness in which we are left as to its real race and origin; and in this the Scoti and the Picts have shared a common destiny. In considering the Scots to have been of Scythian extraction, all parties are agreed,—as well those who contend for a northern colonisation as they who, following the Bardic history, derive their settlement, through Spain, from the East. For this latter view of the subject, there are some grounds, it must be admitted, not unplausible: the Celto-Scythæ, who formed a part of the mixed people of Spain, having come originally from the neighbourhood of the Euxine Sea*, and therefore combining in themselves all the peculiarities attributed to the Milesian colony, of being at once Scythic, Oriental, and direct from Spain. Of the actual settlement of several Spanish tribes in Ireland, and in those very districts of the Irish coast facing Gallicia, we have seen there is no reason to doubt; and there would be, in so far, grounds for connecting them with the Scotic colonisation, as in that very region, it appears, was situated the principal city of the Scoti, in whose name, Hybernis, may be found the mark of its Iberian origin. But however strongly these various facts and coincidences tend to accredit the old

* That the Scythæ of Europe came from the northern parts of Persia, seems to be the opinion of most enquirers on the subject. Hence the near affinity which is found between the German and the Persian languages.

Among those authorities which have run the round of all the writers in favour of the Milesian story, is that of Orosius the historian, who is represented as stating, that "the Scythians expulsed from Gallicia in Spain by Constantine the Great, took shelter in Ireland."—See Dr. Campbell (*Strictures on the Ecclesiastical and Literary History of Ireland*, sect. 5.). This authority, which Dr. Campbell has, in his turn, taken implicitly for granted, would, if genuine, be doubtless highly important. But there is, in reality, no such statement in Orosius, who merely mentions, in describing the position of Ireland, that a part of her coasts ranges opposite to the site of the Gallician city, Brigantia, in Spain.

and constant tradition of a colonisation from Spain, at some very remote period, and however adroitly they have been turned to account by some of the favourers of the Milesian romance, it is evident that, to the comparatively modern settlement of the Scots, they are, in no respect, applicable; the race to whom the southern region of Ireland owed its Iberi and Hybernis, the names of its river Ierne and of its Sacred Promontory, having existed ages before the time when the Scoti — a comparatively recent people, unknown to Maximus of Tyre, or even to Ptolemy himself, — found their way to these shores.

We have, therefore, to seek in some other direction the true origin of this people; and the first clue to our object is afforded by the Bardic historians themselves, who represent the Scoti to have been of Scythic descent, and to have from thence derived their distinctive appellation. By the term Scythia, as applied in the first centuries of Christianity, was understood Germany and the more northern regions of Europe*; and to confirm still further the origin of the Scots from that quarter †, it is added by the Bards that they were of the same race with the three colonies that had preceded them; namely, the Nemedians, the Tuatha-de-Danaans, and the Firbolgs or Belgæ. Now, that these tribes, whether coming through the medium of Britain, or, as some think, direct from their own original countries, were all of German extraction, appears to be the prevailing opinion. One of the most enthusiastic, indeed, of the Milesian believers is of opinion that the Nemedians, or Nemethæ, belonged to that German people, the Nemetes, who inhabited the districts at present occupied by Worms, Spire, and Mentz. ‡ By some the Danaans

* Thus Anastasius, the Sinaite, a monkish writer, whom Pinkerton cites as of the ninth age, but who lived as early as the sixth: — "Σκυθιαν δε εισθασι καλειν οι παλαιοι το κλιμα απαν το Βορειον, ενθα εισιν οι Γοτθοι και Δανεις."

† The genealogy of the Milesians, or Scoti, as given by Keating, lies all in the Sarmatian line; and no less personages than Petorbes, king of the Huns, and the great Attila himself, are mentioned as belonging to one of the collateral branches of their race.

‡ *Dissertations on the History of Ireland*, sect. 13.

are conjectured to have been Danes; or, at least, from the country of the people afterwards known by that name* ; and the Bardic historians, who describe this colony as speaking the German† language, mention Denmark and Norway as the last places from whence they migrated to the British Isles. Of the claims of the Belgæ to be considered a Teutonic people ‡, I have already sufficiently spoken; and to them also, as well as to the other two colonies, the Scoti are alleged to have been akin both in origin and language.

Independently of all this testimony of the Bards, we have also the authentic evidence of Ptolemy's map,— showing how early, from the north of Belgium and the shores of the German Ocean, adventurous tribes had found their way to the Eastern Irish coasts. It has been asserted, rather dogmatically, by some Irish writers, that no descent from Denmark or Norway

* Stillingfleet, *Origin. Britann.* Preface.—Ledwich, *Antiquities, Colonisation of Ireland.*—O'Brien, Preface to Irish Dictionary.—O'Flaherty remarks, "I shall not aver that Danaan has been borrowed from the name of Danes, as the Danes have not been known to the Latins by that name until the establishment of Christianity; though they might have gone under the appellation earlier; in the same manner as the names of Scots and Picts were in use, before they came to the knowledge of the Romans."— *Ogyg.* part 1. The name of Danes was not known till the sixth century, when it is first mentioned by the historians Jornandes and Procopius.

† "Our historians have described, in an eloquent and pompous style, the different and various peregrinations of the Danaans, informing us that they resided, as has already been mentioned, in the northern parts of Germany, to wit, in the cities of Falia, Goria, Finnia, and Muria, and spoke the German language."— *Ogygia.*

With that spirit of unfairness, which but too much pervades his writings, Dr. Ledwich refers to this passage as containing O'Flaherty's own opinions upon the subject:—"O'Flaherty *allows*," he says, "that they spoke the German or Teutonic, and inhabited the cities Falia, Goria, &c. in the north of Germany."

‡ The same division of opinion which prevails in England on this question exists also among the modern Belgians themselves, as may be seen by reference to different articles in the Mémoires de l'Académie de Bruxelles. See, for instance, *Mémoire sur la Religion des Peuples de l'ancienne Belgique*, par M. des Roches (de l'année 1773), throughout the whole of which the learned author takes for granted the Teutonic lineage of the Belgæ, treats of them as a wholly distinct race from the Gauls, and applies to the ancestors of his countrymen all that Tacitus has said of the Germans. In speaking of the days of the week, as having been named after some of the northern gods, M. des Roches says, "Ces jours sont aisés à reconnoitre par les nom, qui les désignent en Flamand; sur-tout si on les compare à la langue Anglo-Saxone, sœur de la nôtre, et aux autres langues septentrionales." On the other hand, in a prize essay of M. du Jardin, 1773, we find the following passage:—"Priusquam in Gallias Romani transissent, Belgæ omnes, ut qui origine Celtæ, Celtice loquebantur."

upon Ireland, no importation of Scandian blood into that island, can be admitted to have taken place before the end of the eighth century.* How far this assertion is founded, a more fitting opportunity will occur for considering, when I come to treat of the later Danish invasions. It may at present suffice to remark, that traces of intercourse with the nations of the Baltic, as well friendly† as hostile‡, are to be found, not only in the Irish annals for some centuries before St. Patrick, but also in the poems, chronicles, and histories of those northern nations themselves. Combining these circumstances with all that is known concerning the migratory incursions to which, a few centuries before our era, so many of the countries of Europe were subject from the tribes inhabiting the coasts of the Baltic and Germanic seas, it appears highly probable that the Scoti were a branch of the same Scythic swarm; and that, having gained a settlement in Ireland, they succeeded in bringing under their dominion both the old Hiberionaces — as St. Patrick styles the original population — and those other foreign colonies, by whom, in succession, the primitive inhabitants had been conquered.

Among the various other hypotheses devised by different writers to account for the origin of the Scots, and the very important part played by them in Ireland, there is not one that explains, even plausibly, the peculiar circumstances that mark the course of their

* Dr. O'Connor, Wood, &c.

† See the Annals of Tigernach, A. D. 79. where he notices the grief of the monarch Lugad for the death of his queen, who was the daughter of the King of Lochland, or Denmark. Alliances of the same nature recur in the second century, when we find the monarch Tuathal, and his son Feidlim, both married to the daughters of Finland kings. "By these marriages," says the author of the Dissertations on Irish History, "we see what close intercourse the Scots held in the second century with the nations bordering on the Baltic." Sect. 5.

In translating the above record of Tigernach, the Rev. Doctor O'Connor has rather suspiciously substituted King of the *Saxons* for King of the Danes.

‡ It appears from Saxo Grammaticus (Hist. Dan. lib. 8.) that already, in the fourth century, some Danish chieftains, whom he names, had been engaged in piratical incursions upon the Irish coasts. Here again Doctor O'Connor has substituted Saxons for Danes; and it is difficult not to agree with Mr. D'Alton, who has pointed out these rather unworthy misquotations (Essay, Period I. sect. 1), that they were designed to "favour the reverend doctor's system of there being no Danes in Ireland previous to the ninth century."

history. According to Richard, the monk of Westminster, and his ready copyist, Whitaker, the Irish Scots were no other than those ancient Britons, who, taking flight on the first invasion of their country by the Belgæ, about 350 years before the Christian era, passed over into the neighbouring island of Ireland, and there, being joined, after an interval of 250 years, by a second body of fugitive Britons *, took the name of Scuites, or Scots, meaning the Wanderers, or Refugees. This crude and vague conjecture, enlisted by Whitaker in aid of his favourite object of proving Ireland to have drawn its population exclusively from Britain, has no one feature either of authority or probability to recommend it. By Pinkerton, Wood, and others, it is held that the Belgæ were the warlike race denominated Scots by the Irish; but the whole course of our early history runs counter to this conjecture, — the Belgæ and Scoti, though joining occasionally as allies in the field, being represented, throughout, as distinct races. Even down to modern times, there are mentioned instances of families in Galway and Sligo claiming descent from the Belgic race, as wholly distinct from the Milesian or Scotic.†

It cannot but be regarded as a remarkable result, that while, as the evidence adduced strongly testifies, so many of the foreign tribes that in turn possessed this island were Gothic, the great bulk of the nation itself, its language, character, and institutions, should have remained so free from change‡; that even the conquering

* It was then, Whitaker says, they first "incorporated themselves into one society." The details of this notable scheme, which supposes so large and important a body of people to have waited 250 years to be incorporated and named, are to be found in the History of Manchester, book i. chap. 12. sect. 4.

† "Lastly, they (the Belgians) settled in Moy-Sachnoly, at this day Hymania, in the county of Galway, after the arrival of St. Patrick, and there O'Layn, and, in the county Sligo, O'Beunachan, to our times the proprietor of a very handsome estate, look on themselves as their real descendants." *Ogygia*, part iii. chap. 12.

‡ "In the Irish tongue," says O'Brien, "the Celtic predominates over all other mixtures, not only of the old Spanish, but also of the Scandinavian and other Scytho-German dialects, though Ireland anciently received three or four different colonies, or rather swarms of adventurers, from those quarters." (*Preface to Dictionary.*) One of the causes he assigns for the

tribes themselves should, one after another, have become mingled with the general mass, leaving only in those few Teutonic words, which are found mixed up with the native Celtic, any vestige of their once separate existence.

The fact evidently is, that long before the period when these Scythic invaders first began to arrive, there had already poured from the shores of the Atlantic into the country, an abundant Celtic population, which, though but too ready, from the want of concert and coalition, which has ever characterised that race, to fall a weak and easy prey to successive bands of adventurers, was yet too numerous, as well as too deeply imbued with another strong Celtic characteristic, attachment to old habits and prejudices, to allow even conquerors to innovate materially either on their language or their usages. From this unchangeableness of the national character it has arisen, that in the history of no other country in Europe do periods far apart, and separated even by ages, act as mirrors to each other so vividly and faithfully. At a comparatively recent era of her annals, when brought unresistingly under the dominion of the English, her relations to her handful of foreign rulers were again nearly the same, and again the result alike to victors and to vanquished was for a long period such as I have above described.

It has been already observed that, in the obscurity which envelopes their name and origin, the destiny of the Scots resembles closely that of another people not less remarkable in the history of the British Isles, known by the name of the Picts; and as, according to the Irish traditions, the Scots and Picts made their appearance in these western regions about the same period, the history of the latter of the two colonies may

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slight effect produced upon the language by such infusions is, that "these foreign adventurers and sea-rovers were under the necessity of begging wives from the natives, and the necessary consequence of this mixture and alliance was that they, or at latest their children, lost their own original language, and spoke no other than that of the nation they mixed with; — which was exactly the case with the first English settlers in Ireland, who soon became more Irishmen both in their language and manners."

help to throw some light on that of its Scotic neighbours. With the account given by the Bardic historians of the Picts sailing in quest of a settlement in these seas, and resting for a time in the south of Ireland on their way, the statement of Bede on the subject substantially agrees* ; and while the Bards represent this people as coming originally from Thrace, the venerable historian expressly denominates them a Scythic people. It would, therefore, appear, that the Scots and the Picts were both of northern race, and, most probably, both from the same hive of hardy adventurers who were then pouring forth their predatory swarms over Europe.

That the Picts were the original inhabitants of North Britain, and the same people with the Caledonians, seems now universally admitted ; and among the various opinions held as to their origin, the conjecture of Camden that they were but Britons under another name, — some indigenous to that region, others driven thither by the terror of the Roman arms, — has been hitherto the opinion most generally received. It is to be recollected, however, that Camden, in pronouncing the Picts to have been Britons, took for granted that the ancient Britons were the same people with the Welsh, — thereby confounding two races which, there is every reason to believe, were wholly distinct. The extraction

* " It happened that the nation of the Picts coming into the ocean from Scythia, as is reported, in a few long ships, the winds driving them about beyond all the borders of Britain, arrived in Ireland, and put into the northern coasts thereof, and finding the nation of the Scots there, requested to be allowed to settle among them, but could not obtain it." —*Ecclesiast. Hist.* book i. chap. 1. In Bede's account of the region from whence they came, the Saxon Chronicle, Geoffrey Monmouth, and all the ancient English historians concur. The following passage also of Tacitus tells strongly in favour of the same opinion : " Rutilæ Caledoniam habitantium comæ, magni artus, Germanicam originem asseverant." — *Agric.* cap. 11. Attempts have been made to get rid of the weight of this authority by a most unfair interpretation of a passage which follows in the same chapter, and which applies evidently only to those inhabitants of Britain, who lived in the neighbourhood of the Gauls — " proximi Gallis." In speaking of this portion of the British population, the historian says, " In universum tamen æstimanti, Gallos vicinum solum occupasse credibile." To suppose that by the expletive phrase " in universum," so deliberate a writer as Tacitus could have meant to retract or overturn an opinion expressed so decidedly but a few lines before, is a stretch of interpretation, upon which only the sturdy spirit of system could have ventured.

claimed by the Welsh themselves, and, as it appears, on no insufficient grounds, from those ancient Cimbri, whose martial virtue the pen of Tacitus has immortalised, at once distinguishes their race from that of the first inhabitants of Britain, who were, it is generally allowed, pure Celts or Gael; while the Cimbri, who lent their name to that northern Chersonesus, from whence the Teutonic tribes inundated Europe, were themselves no less decidedly Teutons.*

With respect to the languages of the two races, the radical differences† between the Gaelic and the Cumraig have been, by more than one intelligent Welshman, admitted and demonstrated; while no less eminent Irish philologers have arrived at exactly the same conclusion. The words common to the two languages appear to be sufficiently accounted for by the close intercourse with each other, which, in different countries of Europe, the Celtic and Cimbric races are known to have maintained.

For another fact illustrative of the true history of the Cymry, we are indebted also to a learned Welsh anti-

* See Dissertation prefixed by Warton to his History of Poetry, where he pronounces the Cimbri to have been a Scandinavian tribe.

+ The first person who ventured to question the supposed affinity between the Gaelic and Cambrian languages was Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromore, in his Preface to Mallet's Northern Antiquities. "To confess my own opinion," he says, "I cannot think they are equally derived from one common Celtic stock." The same writer ventured also to intimate the true reason of the wide difference between these languages. "That the Cimbri of Marius were not a Celtic but German or Gothic people, is an opinion that may be supported with no slight argument." A learned Welshman, the Rev. Mr. Roberts, thus decisively follows up and confirms the bishop's views. "Since the languages of the Cymry and Gael are perfectly distinct, they must be distinct nations; and if the distinction had been cautiously attended to, much confusion, both in history and etymology, would have been avoided." The same writer adds, "Had Mr. Whitaker known either the Welsh or Gaelic language well, I am persuaded he would have been very far from supposing that the Cymry and Gael were the same people, for he would have found that either of their languages is of no more use to the understanding of the other, than the mere knowledge of the Latin to the understanding of the Greek." While such is the view taken by a learned Welshman respecting the relationship between the two languages, a no less learned Irish scholar thus expresses himself on the subject: — "The Gomeraeg spoken at this day in North Wales, and the Gaelic spoken in Ireland, are as different in their syntactic constructions as any two tongues can be." (*O'Connor, Dissert. on Hist. of Scotland.*) Sir W. Betham asserts still more decidedly the radical difference between the two languages, adopting the same views respecting the origin of the Welsh people, which I have above endeavoured to enforce. See his *Gael and the Cimbri* for some curious illustrations of this point.

quary, who has shown, by the evidence of those undying memorials, the names of rivers, headlands, and mountains, that another race had preceded the Welsh in the possession of that country,—the words wedded, from time immemorial, to her hills and waters, being all Gaelic or Irish.* The original seat, therefore, of the Cymry in Britain, must be sought for, it is clear, elsewhere; and if there be any region where similar traces of ancient inhabitancy are found, where the rivers and hills, the harbours and promontories, are all invested with Welsh names, we may there fix, without hesitation, the site of their primitive abode. This region, the mountainous territory of the ancient Picts supplies.† In the parts of North Britain once inhabited by that mysterious people, the language of the Cymry is still alive in the names of those permanent features of nature which alone defy oblivion, and tell the story of the first dwellers to all the races that succeed them.

Taking these, and some other circumstances that shall presently be mentioned, into consideration, it is hardly possible, I think, to resist the conclusion, that the people called Picts were the progenitors of the present Welsh,—being themselves a branch of that Cimbric stock from whence all the traditions of the latter people represent them to have been derived;—and that, instead of the Welsh having become the Picts, as was supposed by Camden and others, the result of the evidence shows, on the contrary, that the Picts became the Welsh.

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* Lhuyd, Preface to Geography: already referred to, chapter 1., for the same fact.

† See, for a long list of these Welsh denominations of places, Chalmers's Caledonia, vol. i. chap. 1.—"In the laborious work of Mr. Chalmers," says Dr. Pritchard, "there is a collection of such terms, which seems amply sufficient to satisfy the most incredulous, that the dialect of the Cambro-Britons was, at one period, the prevailing idiom on the north-eastern parts of Scotland."

A few instances are mentioned by Chalmers, in which the names given by the Picts or Welsh were superseded by their Scoto-Irish successors. Thus it appears from charters of the twelfth century, that *Inver* was substituted by the Scots for the *Aber* of the previous inhabitants; David I. having granted to the monastery of May "*Inver*-in qui fuit *Aber*-in:" and the influx of the Nethy into the Ern, whose familiar name had been *Aber*-nethy, was changed by the later people into *Inver*-nethy, and both these names, it is added, still remain.

Obscure and involved as are the records of British history for some ages after the departure of the Romans, there can yet enough be discerned, through the darkness, to enable us to track the course of this warlike people, in their resistless career towards the south, as well as in that gradual change of name which they underwent during their progress. The entire abdication of the island by the Romans was evidently the crisis of which the restless Picts availed themselves to carry their arms, with a view to permanent conquest, into regions they had before but temporarily devastated. Breaking through the long guarded frontier, they took possession, without any struggle, of all the midland provinces, reaching from the wall of Northumberland to the friths of Forth and Clyde, and there established that Regnum Cumbrense, or Kingdom of Strat-Clyde *, in whose mixed population — composed, as it was, of all the tribes of North Britain, — their old distinctive name of Picts began first to be unsettled and disused. Here, however, they continued to maintain themselves, against all the efforts of the Saxons to dispossess them; and, under the German name of the Walli or Welsh, bestowed upon them by the invaders †, may be traced as acting a distinguished part in the affairs of Britain for many centuries after.

* Pinkerton vainly endeavours to make a distinction between the Regnum Cumbrense and the Kingdom on the Clyde. (*Enquiry into Hist. of Scotland*, part ii. chap. 5.) Their identity has been clearly proved both by Innes (vol. i. chap. 2. art. 2.) and Chalmers, book ii. chap 2.

The author of a late popular history, Thierry (*Hist. de la Conquête de l'Angleterre*), has so far confounded the localities of the ancient Welsh history as to mistake Cumbria, the present county of Cumberland, for Wales. Speaking of the Northern Britons, he says, "Les fugitifs de ces contrées avoient gagné le grand asile du pays de Galles, ou bien l'angle de terre hérissé de montagnes que baigne la mer au Golfe de Solway."

That the Picts, towards the end of the sixth century, formed the main part of the population of this kingdom, appears from a statement in the Life of St. Kentigern, by Jocelin, which shows that Galloway was, at this period, in the possession of the Picts; and it was probably about this time they began to be known by that name of Galwejenses, which continued to be applied to them for many centuries after. (See *Innes*, vol. i. book 1. chap. 2.) While thus the Picts were called Galwejenses, we find Matthew of Westminster, at a later period, giving the same name to the Welsh; thereby identifying, in so far, the latter people with the Picts.

† The name, says Camden, by which "the Saxon conqueror called foreigners, and every thing that was strange."

To this epoch of their northern kingdom, all the traditions of the modern Welsh refer for their most boasted antiquities, and favourite themes of romance.* The name of their chivalrous hero, Arthur, still lends a charm to much of the topography of North Britain; and among the many romantic traditions connected with Stirling Castle, is that of its having once been the scene of the festivities of the Round Table. The poets Aneurin and Taliessin, the former born in the neighbourhood of the banks of the Clyde†, graced the court, we are told, of Urien, the king of Reged, or Cumbria; and the title Caledonius bestowed on the enchanter Merlin, who was also a native of Strat-Clyde, sufficiently attests his northern and Pictish race. It may be added, as another strong confirmation of the identity between the Strat-Clyde Welsh and the Picts, that from the time of the total defeat of the latter by Keneth Macalpine, king of the Scots, no further mention occurs of the kingdom of Strat-Clyde. The traditional story of the utter extinction of the Pictish people at this period, so far as to have left, we are told, not even a vestige of their language, bears upon the face of it the marks of legendary fiction; while the fact of their ancient title of Picts having been, about this time, eclipsed by their new designation of Walli, accounts satisfactorily for the origin and general belief of such a fable.

* Most of the great Welsh pedigrees, too, commence their line from princes of the Cumbrian Kingdom, and the archaiologist Lhuyd himself boasts of his descent from ancestors in the "province of Reged in Scotland, in the fourth century, before the Saxons came into Britain." — *Prcf. to Archæologia.*

There is, however, visibly and from motives by no means unintelligible, an unwillingness, on the part of modern Welsh historians, to bring much into notice this northern seat of Cymbric enterprise and renown. For the name of Cumbria that of Reged is usually substituted, and the founders of their kingdom in Wales are alleged to have been the sons of a northern prince, named Cynetha, or Cenetha (evidently their Scottish king Kenneth), who, "leaving Cumberland and some neighbouring countries, where they ruled, to the government of one of their family, retired into North Wales, their grandmother's country, and seated themselves in the several divisions of it, as their names left on those places do to this day testify." — *Rowland's Mona Antiqua*, sect. ii. See also *Warrington's Hist. of Wales*, book i.

† The river Clyde, in North Wales, was, it is clear, named by the new possessors of that country, after the Clyde of their old kingdom in Scotland.

With respect to the period at which this people may be supposed to have fixed themselves in Wales, a series of migrations thither from Cumbria, at different intervals, have been recorded by the Chroniclers; and, among others, it is said that, in the year 890, a body of emigrants, under the command of a chief named Constantine, fought their way through the ranks of the Saxons to that country. But their main movement towards the south, whether voluntarily, or under pressure from the invader, must have occurred at a much earlier period,— not more than a century, probably, from the time of their first outbreak from their own hills; as, before the end of the sixth age, they had already possessed themselves both of Wales and of Cornwall, and established a colony, apparently by conquest, in the province of Armoric Gaul.

Much more might be added in corroboration of this view of the origin of the Welsh, but that already, perhaps, I have dwelt somewhat more diffusely upon it than may seem to be justified by the immediate object I had in view, which was, by enquiring into the most probable history of the Pictish people of Britain, to gain some clue to that of their fellow Scythians, the Scoti of Ireland; as well as some insight into the race and origin of those Cruithene, or Painted Men, who, about the same period, took up their abode in a part of the province of Ulster. With respect to the Scoti, the probability of their having been a Scandinavian people* is considerably strengthened by the weight of evidence and authority which pronounces the Picts to have been a colony from the same quarter,

* Bishop Stillingfleet declares strongly in favour of the opinion that the Picts "were from the same parts" as the Scots; but interprets Bede's words rather too favourably for his purpose, when he represents him as saying that "on being carried by a tempest to Ireland, they found there Gentem Scotorum, i. e. (adds the bishop) their countrymen, the Scythians." Among the most convincing indications of their having been kindred tribes, are those deduced by Buchanan, from their facility of intercourse on first meeting, their mutual confidence and intermarriages, and the amicable neighbourhood of their settlement afterwards in North Britain. "Facile majores Pictorum Scotis fuisse conciliatos puto, atque ab eisdem, ut traditur, adjutos, ut homines cognatos, ejusdem fere linguæ, nec dissimilium rituum." — *Hist. Scot.* lib. ii. 27.

as their joint history is thus rendered concurrent and consistent; and it seems naturally to have followed from the success of the former in gaining possession of Ireland, that others of the adventurous rovers of the North should try their fortunes in the same region. Of that detachment of Pictish adventurers which fixed their quarters, as we have said, in the North of Ireland, there will occur occasions to take some notice, in the course of the following pages. I shall here only remark that, by their intermixture with the primitive inhabitants of the country, they were doubtless the means of engrafting on the native tongue those words of Cimbric origin which, notwithstanding the radical difference between the two languages, has given to the Irish and the Welsh so imposing an appearance of affinity. *

CHAP. VII.

HISTORY OF IRELAND FROM THE LANDING OF THE SCOTIC COLONY TO THE ARRIVAL OF ST. PATRICK.

In commencing his history of the Milesian or Scotic monarchs, by far the most trustworthy of the Irish annalists informs us, "that all the records of the Scots, before the time of king Kimbaoth, are uncer-

* The amount of this resemblance between the two languages appears to be, after all, but trifling. "There is," says Mr. Roberts, the intelligent Welsh scholar, already quoted, "about one word in fifteen similar, but rarely the same, in sound and signification, in both languages. In the first nine columns of the Irish Dictionary, printed by Lhuyd in his Archæologia, there are 400 words, of which I have not been able to discover more than twenty, in common to both languages, nor have I succeeded better in several trials. Moreover, the grammatical structure, as to the declension and construction, are *radically* different." — *Chronicle of the Kings of Britain.*

A learned German glossologist, Adelung, is also to be numbered among those who consider the Welsh tongue to be a descendant from that of the Belgæ, and not from that of the Celtæ.

tain." * This monarch, who, according to the senachies, was the seventy-fifth king of Ireland, and the fifty-seventh of the Milesian dynasty, flourished, as we learn from the same authorities, about 300 years before Christ: but the learned Dr. O'Connor, by whom the lists of these ancient kings have been examined with a degree of zeal and patience worthy of a far better task, has shown that, according to the regal lists of the senachies themselves, the reign of Kimbaoth cannot be carried back to a remoter date than 200 years before our era. The reader who has attended, however, to the facts adduced in the foregoing pages, proving how groundless are the claims to a remote antiquity which have been advanced for the Scotic or Milesian colony, will, I doubt not, be of opinion that a scheme of chronology which supposes the fifty-sixth monarch of the Scotic dynasty to have existed 200 or 300 years before the birth of Christ, may be got rid of with a much less expenditure of learning and labour than it has cost Dr. O'Connor, and other such zealots in the cause of antiquity, to establish and support it.

Without entering at present, however, into any further examination of the chronological reckonings and regal lists of the antiquaries, or pointing out how far, in spite of the extravagant dates assigned to them, the reality of the events themselves may be relied upon, I shall proceed to lay before the reader a sketch of the history of Pagan Ireland, from the time of the landing of the Scotic colony, to the great epoch of the conversion of the Irish to Christianity by St. Patrick. Into any of those details of war and bloodshed which form so large a portion of our annals, Pagan as well as Christian, I shall not think it necessary to enter; while, of the civil transactions, my object will be to select principally those which appear to be most sanctioned by the general consent of tradition, and afford, at least,

* Tigernach. — "Omnia monumenta Scotorum usque Cimbaoth incerta erant." For some account of this annalist, who died A. D. 1088, see Ware's Writers. — *Rer. Hibern. Scrip.* tom. ii. &c. &c.

pictures of manners, even where they may be thought questionable as records of fact.

A decisive victory over the Tuatha-de-Danaan, the former possessors of the country, having transferred the sovereignty to Heber and Heremon, the sons of the Spanish king Milesius, these two brothers divided the kingdom between them; and while Leinster and Munster were, it is said, the portion assigned to Heber, the younger brother, Heremon, had for his share the provinces of Ulster and Connaught. There was also a third brother, Amergin, whom they appointed Arch-Bard, or presiding minister over the respective departments of Law*, Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion. In the divided sovereignty thus exercised by the family, may be observed the rudiments of that system of government which prevailed so longamong their successors; while, in the office of the Arch-Bard we trace the origin of those metrical legislators and chroniclers who took so prominent a part in public affairs under all the Scotic princes.

In another respect, it must be owned, the commencement of the Milesian monarchy was marked strongly by the features which but too much characterised its whole course. A beautiful valley, which lay in the territories of Heremon, had been, for some time, a subject of dispute between the two brothers†; and their differences at length kindling into animosity, led to a battle between them on the plains of Geisiol, where Heber lost his life, leaving Heremon sole possessor of the kingdom. Even the peaceful profession of the Arch-Poet Amergin did not exempt him from the effects of the discord thus early at work; as, in a sub-

* "Amergin was the Brehon of the colony, and was also a poet and philosopher."—*O'Reilly on the Brehon Laws.*

† The particulars of this quarrel are thus stated by Keating:—"The occasion of the dispute was the possession of three of the most delightful vallies in the whole island. Two of these lay in the division of Heber Fionn, and he received the profits of them; but his wife, being a woman of great pride and ambition, envied the wife of Heremon the enjoyment of one of those delightful vallies, and, therefore, persuaded her husband to demand the valley of Heremon; and, upon a refusal, to gain possession of it by the sword; for she passionately vowed she never would be satisfied till she was called the Queen of the three most fruitful Vallies in the island."

sequent battle, this third son of Milesius fell also a victim to his brother Heremon's sword.*

To the reign of Heremon, the Bardic historians refer the first coming of the people called Picts into these regions. Landing upon the eastern coast of Ireland, they proposed to establish themselves on the island; but the natives, not deeming such a settlement expedient, informed them of other islands, on the north-east, which were uninhabited, and where they might fix their abode. To this suggestion the Picts readily assented, but first desired that some of the Milesian women might be permitted to accompany them; pledging themselves solemnly that, should they become masters of that country they were about to invade, the sovereignty should be ever after vested in the descendants of the female line.† This request having been granted, the Pictish chiefs, accompanied by their Milesian wives, set sail for the islands bordering on Scotland, and there established their settlement.

Passing over the immediate successors of Heremon, we meet with but little that is remarkable till we arrive at the reign of the idolater Tighernmas, who, while offering sacrifice, at a great popular convention, to the

* There are still extant three poems attributed to this bard, one of them said to have been written by him while he was coasting on the shores of Ireland. This latter poem the reader will find, together with a brief outline of its meaning, in Hardiman's Irish Minstrelsy, vol. ii. notes. "There still remain," says the enthusiastic editor, "after a lapse of nearly three thousand years, fragments of these ancient bards (Amergin and Lugad, the son of Ith), some of which will be found included in the following pages, with proofs of their authenticity." — *Preface.*

The following is the account given of the supposed poems of Amergin by the learned editor of the Transactions of the Iberno-Celtic Society. — "These compositions are written in the Bearla Feini, and accompanied with an interlined gloss, without which they would be unintelligible to modern Irish scholars. The gloss itself requires much study to understand it perfectly, as the language is obsolete, and must in many places be read from bottom to top."

† This matrimonial compact of the Picts is thus, in a spirit far worse than absurd, misrepresented by O'Halloran: — "They, at the same time, requested wives from Heremon, engaging, in the most solemn manner, that not only then, but for ever after, if they or their successors should have issue by a British, and again by an Irish woman, that the issue of this last *only* should be capable of succeeding to the inheritance! and which law continued in force to the days of Venerable Bede, i. e. about 2000 years! a mark of such striking distinction that it cannot be paralleled in the history of any other nation under the sun!" — Vol. ii. chap. 4.

This policy of deducing the royal succession through the female line, not through the male, was always retained by the Picts.

monstrous idol, Crom-Cruach, was, together with the vast multitude around him, miraculously destroyed. During the reign of this king, gold is said to have been, for the first time, worked in Ireland; a mine of that metal having been discovered in the woods to the east of the river Liffey. *

In the reign of Achy, who was the immediate successor of Tighernmas, a singular law was enacted, regulating the exact number of colours by which the garments of the different classes of society were to be distinguished. † Plebeians and soldiers were, by this ordinance, to wear but a single colour; military officers of an inferior rank, two; commanders of battalions, three; the keepers of houses of hospitality ‡, four; the nobility and military knights, five; and the Bards and Ollamhs, who were distinguished for learning, six, being but one colour less than the number worn by the reigning princes themselves. These regulations are curious; not only as showing the high station allotted to learning and talent, among the qualifications for distinction, but as presenting a coincidence rather remarkable with that custom of patriarchal times which made a garment of many colours the appropriate dress of kings' daughters and princes. §

For a long period, indeed, most of the Eastern nations retained both the practice of dividing the people into

* "At Fothart," says Simon, "near the river Liffey, in the county of Wicklow, where gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron, have of late years been found out." — *Simon on Irish Coins.*

† A similar fancy for party-coloured dresses existed among the Celts of Gaul, and Diodorus describes that people as wearing garments flowered with all varieties of colour — χρωμασι παντοδαποις διηνθισμενους. — Lib. 5. The part of their dress which they called braccæ, or breeches, was so named from its being plaided; the word brac signifying in Celtic, anything speckled or party-coloured. The historian, Tacitus, in describing Cæcina as dressed in the Gaulish fashion, represents him with breeches, or trowsers, and a plaid mantle: — "Versicolore sago, braccas, tegmen barbarum indutus." — *Hist.* lib. ii. cap. 20.

‡ An order of men appointed by the state, and endowed with lands, for the purpose of keeping constantly open house, and giving entertainment to all travellers in proportion to their rank. These officers are frequently mentioned in the Brehon laws, and, among other enactments respecting them, it is specified that each Bruigh shall keep in his house, for the amusement of travellers, Taibhle Fioch-thoille, or chess-boards.

§ Thus, Jacob made Joseph a coat of many colours (Gen. xxxvii. 3.); and Tamar (2 Sam. xiii. 18.) "had a garment of divers colours; for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled."

different castes and professions, and also, as appears from the regulations of Giamschid, king of Persia *, this custom of distinguishing the different classes by appropriate dresses. From the party-coloured garments worn by the ancient Scots, or Irish, is derived the national fashion of the plaid, still prevailing among their descendants in Scotland.

Among the numerous kings that, in this dim period of Irish history, pass like shadows before our eyes, the Royal Sage, Ollamh Fodhla †, is almost the only one who, from the strong light of tradition thrown round him, stands out as a being of historical substance and truth. It would serve to illustrate the nature and extent of the evidence with which the world is sometimes satisfied, to collect together the various celebrated names which are received as authentic on the strength of tradition alone ‡; and few, perhaps, could claim a more virtual title to this privilege than the great legislator of the ancient Irish, Ollamh Fodhla. In considering the credit, however, that may safely be attached to the accounts of this celebrated personage, we must dismiss wholly from our minds the extravagant antiquity assigned to him § by the seanachies; and as it has been shown that the date of the dynasty itself, of which he was so distinguished an ornament, cannot, at the utmost, be removed further back than the second century before our era, whatever his fame may thus lose in antiquity it will be found to gain in probability; since, as we shall

* "Saâdi veut aussi, que ce prince ait non seulement divisé les hommes en plusieurs états et professions, mais qu'il les ait encore distingués par des habits et par des coiffures différentes." — *D'Herbelot.*

† Pronounced Ollav Folla. This quiescence of many of the consonants in our Irish names render them far more agreeable to the ear than to the eye. Thus the formidable name of Tigernach, our great annalist, is softened, in pronunciation, into Tierna.

‡ Among the most signal instances, perhaps, is that of the poet Orpheus, who notwithstanding the decidedly expressed opinion, both of Aristotle and Cicero, that no such poet ever existed, still continues, and will of course for ever continue, to be regarded as a real historical personage.

§ In fixing the period of this monarch's reign, chronologers have been widely at variance. While some place it no less than 1316 years before the Christian era (Thady Roddy, MSS.), Plowden makes it 950 years (Hist. Review, prelim. chap.), O'Flaherty between 700 and 800, and the author of the Dissertations, &c. about 600. (Sect. 4.)

see when I come to treat of the credibility of the Irish annals, the epoch of this monarch, if not within the line to which authentic history extends, is, at least, not very far beyond it.

Some of the most useful institutions of Ollamh Fodhla are said to have but a short time survived himself. But the act which rendered his reign an important era in legislation was the establishment of the Great Fes, or Triennial Convention at Tara, an approach so far to representative government that, in these periodical assemblies, the leading persons of the three orders of whom the political community consisted, — that is to say, the Monarch, the Druids or Ollamhs, and the Plebeians, — were convened for the purpose of passing such laws and regulations as the public good seemed to require.* In the presence of these assemblies, also, the different records of the kingdom were examined; whatever materials for national history the provincial annals supplied, were here sifted and epitomised, and the result entered in the great national Register called the Psalter of Tara.†

In a like manner, according to the historian Ctesias, who drew his own materials professedly from such sources, it was enjoined to the Persians, by an express law, that they should write down the annals of their country in the royal archives. In Ireland this practice of chronicling events continued to be observed to a late period; and not only at the courts of the different Kings, but even in the family of every inferior chief-

* So represented by those zealous antiquaries, O'Flaherty, O'Connor, &c.; but it will be shown presently that, like the Coloni of the Franks, and the Ceorls of the Anglo-Saxons, the Plebeians, under the ancient Irish government, were wholly excluded from political power.

† Keating speaks of this authentic Register of the Nation as extant in his time; but O'Connor says, "there is good reason to believe that no considerable part of it escaped the devastations of the Norman war." The following is all that the industrious bishop Nicholson could learn of it: — "What is now become of this Royal Monument is hard to tell; for some of our moderns affirm that they have lately seen it, while others as confidently maintain that it has not appeared for some centuries last past." (*Historic Library*, chap. ii.) Parts of that collection of Irish Records, called the Psalter of Cashel, which was compiled in the tenth century, are supposed to have been transcribed from the ancient Psalter of Tara.

tain, a Seanachie, or historian, formed always a regular part of the domestic establishment. To this recording spirit, kept alive, as it was, in Christian times, by a succession of monastic chroniclers, we owe all those various volumes of Psalters and Annals with which the ancient literature of Ireland abounds.

The policy which Herodotus tells us was adopted among the Egyptians and the Lacedæmonians, of rendering employments and offices hereditary in families, was also, from the time of Ollamh Fodhla down to a very recent period, the established usage in Ireland. This strange custom formed one of the contrivances of that ancient stationary system, which has been the means of keeping the people of the East and their institutions so little changed through all time. The same principle which led the Egyptians to prohibit their sculptors and painters from innovating, even with a view to improvement, on the ancient models transmitted to them, prompted them also to ordain, as the Irish did after them, that the descendants of a physician *, for instance, or an artificer, should continue physicians and artificers through all succeeding generations. Not only in their early adoption of this truly Eastern rule, but in the constancy with which, to this day, they have continued, through all changes of time, to adhere to most of their ancient characteristics and usages, the Irish have proved themselves in so far

* "What is remarkable," says Smith, in his History of Cork, "of this last family of the O'Cullinans, is, that it was never known without one or more physicians in it; which is remarked by Camden; insomuch, that when a person is given over, they have a saying in Irish, 'Even an O'Cullinan cannot cure him.' Which profession still continues in the family." (Book i. chap. 1.) An attempt has been made by Rollin, and not unplausibly, to justify this hereditary system. — "By this means (he says) men became more able and expert in employments which they had always been trained up to from their infancy; and every man adding his own experience to that of his ancestors was more capable of rising to perfection in his particular art. Besides, this wholesome institution, established anciently through the Egyptian nation, extinguished all irregular ambition," &c. (*Manners and Customs of the Egyptians.*) Herodotus, however, in the concluding sentence of the following passage, has laid open quietly the inherent absurdity of such a system. "In one instance, the Lacedæmonians observe the usage of Egypt; their heralds, musicians, and cooks follow the profession of their fathers. The son of a herald is, of course, a herald, and the same of the other two professions. If any man has a louder voice than the son of a herald, it signifies nothing." — Lib. 6.

worthy of their oriental descent, and but too faithful inheritors of the same stationary principle.

Among the important offices transmitted hereditarily in Ireland, were those of heralds, practitioners in physic, bards, and musicians. To the professors of these arts Ollamh Fodhla assigned lands for their use; and also instituted a school of general instruction at Tara, which became afterwards celebrated under the name of the Mur-ollam-ham, or College of the Learned.

A long series of Kings, with scarcely a single event worthy of commemoration, fills up the interval between the reign of this monarch and the building of the palace of Emania by king Kimboath; an event forming, as we have seen, a prominent era in the Irish annals, and from which Tigernach dates the dawn of authentic history. This splendid palace of the princes of Ulster, who were from thenceforward called Kings of Emania, had in its neighbourhood the mansion appropriated to the celebrated Knights of the Red Branch, so triumphantly sung by the bards, and commemorated by the seanachies.

If the Bardic historians, in describing the glory and magnificence of some of these reigns, have shown no ordinary powers of flourish and exaggeration, it is to be hoped, for the credit of human nature, that they have also far outstripped the truth in their accounts of the discord, treachery, and bloodshed by which almost every one of these brief paroxysms of sovereignty was disgraced. Out of some two-and-thirty kings who are said to have reigned during the interval between Ollamh Fodhla and the royal builder of Emania, not more than three are represented as having died a natural death, and the great majority of the remainder fell by the hands of their successors.*

* The language in which O'Flaherty and O'Halloran relate some of these events is but too well suited to their subject. "Lugad Luagny, the son of the king Inatmar," says O'Flaherty, "cut Bresal's throat, and got the crown." (Part iii. chap. 41.)—"His reign," says O'Halloran of another monarch, "lasted but five years, when the sword of his successor cut his way threugh him to the Irish throne." (Vol. ii. chap. 7.)

Though the building of the royal palace of Emania was assumed as a technical epoch by the chronologers, the accession of Hugony the Great, as he was called, proved, in a political point of view, an era still more remarkable; as, by his influence with the assembled States at Tara, he succeeded in annulling the Pentarchy; and, moreover, prevailed on the four provincial kings to surrender their right of succession in favour of his family, exacting from them a solemn oath, "by all things visible and invisible*," not to accept of a supreme monarch from any other line. For the Pentarchal government this monarch substituted a division of the kingdom into twenty-five districts, or dynasties; thus ridding himself of the rivalry of provincial royalty, and, at the same time, widening the basis of the monarchical or rather aristocratical power.† The abjuration of their right of succession, which had been extorted from the minor kings, was, as might be expected, revoked on the first opportunity that offered; but the system of government established in place of the Pentarchy, was continued down nearly to the commencement of our era, when, under the monarch Achy Fedloch, it was rescinded, and the ancient form restored.

After the reign of Hugony, there succeeds another long sterile interval, extending, according to the Bardic chronology, through a space of more than three hundred years, during which, with the exception of king Labhra's‡ return from Gaul at the head of a Gaulish colony — an event to which allusion has already been made — not a single public transaction is recorded

* Annal. IV. Magist. —In these annals Ugony the Great is styled "king of Hibernia and all Western Europe, as far as the Tuscan sea."

† According to the view taken by some writers of this change, the principle of the Pentarchal government was therein preserved; as Ugony retained the division of the country into five provinces, and in each established a Pentarchy.

‡ In the accounts of the reign of this monarch, as given by Keating and others, are introduced two romantic stories, resembling, one of them, the fabulous adventure of Richard Cœur de Lion and Blondel; and the other, the story of Midas's ears, and the miraculous revealment of his secret. In the weak and verbose work of Dr. Warner (*Hist. of Ireland*, vol. i. book 3.), the reader will find these stories diluted through some half dozen pages.

worthy of notice; the names of the kings, as usual, succeeding each other at fearfully short intervals; and, in general, their accession and murder being the only events of their brief career recorded.

In the reign of Conary the Great, which coincides with the commencement of the Christian era, the name dwelt upon, with most interest, by the chroniclers is that of the young hero Cuchullin, whose death, in the full flush and glory of his career, took place, according to these authorities, in the second year of Christ. With the fame of this Irish warrior modern readers have been made acquainted by that splendid tissue of fiction and forgery imposed upon the world as the Poems of Ossian, where, in one of those flights of anachronism not infrequent in that work, he is confronted with the bard and hero, Oisin, who did not flourish till the middle of the third century. The exploits of Cuchullin, Conal Cearnach, and other Heroes of the Red Branch, in the memorable Seven Years' War between Connaught and Ulster*, are among those themes on which the old chroniclers and bardic historians most delight to dwell. The circumstance recorded of the young Cuchullin by these annalists, that, when only seven years old, he was invested with knighthood, might have been regarded as one of the marvels of traditionary story, had we not direct evidence, in a fact mentioned by Froissart, that, so late as the time of that chronicler, the practice of knighting boys at the very same age,—more especially

A. D. 2.

* This celebrated septennial war bears, in Irish history, the name of the Tain-bo-Cuailgne, or the Spoils of the Cattle at Cuailgne; one of the chief causes of its origin having been the seizure of an immense quantity of cattle by the troops of Maud, the queen of Connaught, at Cuailgne, in the county of Louth. The march of her army on this expedition, commanded by Fergus, the dethroned king of Ulster,—the splendour of the queen herself, seated in an open chariot, with her Asion, or crown of gold, on her head,—the names of the Champions of the Red Branch, who bravely encountered her mighty force,—all these circumstances are found detailed in the stories and romances respecting this memorable invasion; and from some of these fictions, it appears, Macpherson derived the groundwork of his Poems of Fingal and Temora. See Mr. O'Connor's Dissertation on the History of Scotland, where, in speaking of these poems, it is said, "They are evidently founded on the romances and vulgar stories of the Tan-Bo-Cualgney war, and those of the Fiana Ereann."

those of royal parentage,—was still retained in Ireland.*

From what has been said of the high station and dignities assigned to their Bards and Antiquaries, it will have been seen that in the political system of the ancient Irish, the Literary or Bardic order, which appears to have been distinct from the Druidical, formed one of the most active and powerful springs. Supported by lands set aside for their use, and surrounded by privileges and immunities which, even in the midst of civil commotion, rendered their persons and property sacred, they were looked up to not only as guardians of their country's history and literature, but as interpreters and dispensers of its laws. Thus endowed and privileged, this class of the community came at length to possess such inordinate power, and, by a natural consequence, so much to abuse it, that a popular reaction against their encroachments was the result, and their whole order was about to be expelled
A. D. from the kingdom. In this crisis of their fate, the
40. heroic Conquovar, king of Ulster, espoused the cause of the Bards; and, protesting strongly against the policy of suppressing them altogether, succeeded in effecting such reformations in the constitution of their order, more especially in all that related to their judicial proceedings, as at length restored them to public favour. The better to regulate their decisions for the future, he caused a digest of the ancient laws to be formed, under the auspices of Forchern, and two other distinguished poets; and the code thus compiled was called

* In Froissart's curious account of the knighting of the four Irish kings by Richard II., it is related that, on being asked whether they would not gladly receive the order of knighthood from the king of England, "they answered how they were knights already, and that sufficed for them. I asked where they were made knights, and how, and when. They answered at the age of seven years they were made knights in Ireland, and that a king maketh his son a knight....And then this young knight shall begin to just with small spears against a shield set on a stake in the field; and the more spears that he breaketh, the more he shall be honoured."—Froissart, vol. ii. chap. 202.

We are told, says sir James Ware, in a MS. Life of St. Carthag, bishop of Lismore, who flourished in the seventh century, that "Moelfulius, one of the petty princes of Kerry, intending to knight St. Carthag, while he was a boy, would have put into his hand a sword and target, being the badge or cognisance of knighthood."—*Antiquities*, chap. 26.

by their admiring contemporaries, Breathe Neimidh, or the Celestial Judgments.* In having poets thus for their lawgivers, the Irish but followed the example of most of the ancient nations; among whom, in the infancy of legislation, the laws were promulgated always in verse, and often publicly sung; and even so late as the time of Strabo, the chief magistrate of the people of Mazaca, in Cappadocia, (who was to them what jurisconsults were to the Romans), bore the title, as we are informed by Strabo, of the Law-singer.†

As we advance into the Christian era, a somewhat clearer and more extended range of horizon opens upon us; as well from our approaching that period to which the authentic annals of the country extend, as from the light which thenceforward the Roman accounts of Britain throw incidentally on the affairs of the sister island. It was during the reign of the Irish monarch Crimthan, or, according to others, that of his successor Fiachad, that Agricola was engaged in pursuing his victorious enterprises in Britain; and the few facts relating to Ireland, which his philosophic biographer discloses, are, in themselves, worth whole volumes of vague, ordinary history: as, though but glimpses, the insight which they afford is vivid and searching. The simple statement, for instance, of Tacitus, that, at the period when he wrote, the waters and harbours of Ireland were, through the means of commerce and of navigators, better known than those of Britain‡, opens such a retrospect at once into her foregone history, as, combined with similar glimpses in other writings of

A. D. 75 to 82.

* This translation of the term, which has been adopted by all other authorities on the subject, is, I find, questioned by the learned Irish scholar, Mr. O'Reilly (Trans. of Iberno-Celtic Society), who contends, in opposition to O'Flaherty, the O'Connors, O'Halloran, &c., that the meaning of the words Breathe Neimidh is the Laws of the Nobles. This is but one of numerous instances that might be adduced, in which important Irish words are shown to be capable of entirely different meanings in the hands of different interpreters,—seeming in so far to justify those charges of vagueness and confusion which Pinkerton, in his hatred of every thing Celtic, brings so constantly against the Irish language. See Enquiry, &c., part iii. chap. 2.

† Ἀιξουμενοι και νομωδουν, ὃς εστιν ουτοις εξηγητης των νομων, lib. 12.

‡ Melius aditus portusque per commercia et negociatores cogniti. —*Agric.* cap. 24.

antiquity, renders credible her claims to early civilisation, and goes far to justify some of the proud boasts of her annals.

In a far other sense, the view opened by the historian into the interior of Ireland's politics at that moment, — the divided and factious state of her people, and the line of policy which, in consequence, the shrewd Agricola, as ruler of Britain, was preparing to pursue towards them, — is all of melancholy importance, as showing at how early a period Irishmen had become memorable for disunion among themselves, and how early those who were interested in weakening them, had learned to profit by their dissensions.

"One of their petty kings," says Tacitus, "who had been forced to fly by some domestic faction, was received by the Roman general, and under a show of friendship detained for ulterior purposes." * The plan successfully pursued by Cæsar towards Gaul, of playing off her various factions against each other †, and making her own sons the ready instruments of her subjugation, would have been the policy doubtless of Agricola towards Ireland, had these ulterior purposes been put in execution. The object of the Irishman was to induce the Romans to invade his native country; and by his representations, it appears, Agricola was persuaded into the belief that, with a single legion, and a small body of auxiliaries, he could conquer and retain possession of Ireland. ‡

It would hardly be possible, perhaps, in the whole compass of history, to find a picture more pregnant with the future, more prospectively characteristic, than this of a recreant Irish prince in the camp of the Romans, proffering his traitorous services to the stranger, and depreciating his country as an excuse for betraying her. It is, indeed, mournful to reflect that, at the end of

* Agricola expulsum seditione domestica unum ex Regulis gentis exceperat, ac specie amicitiæ in occasionem retinebat. — *Agric.* cap. 24.

† De Bell. Gal. lib. vi. c. 13.

‡ Sæpe ex eo audivi legione una et modicis auxiliis debellari obtinerique Hiberniam posse. — *Agric.* ib.

nearly eighteen centuries, the features of this national portrait should remain so very little altered; and that with a change only of scene from the tent of the Roman general to the closet of the English minister or viceroy, the spectacle of an Irishman playing the game of his country's enemies has been, even in modern history, an occurrence by no means rare.

Offence has been taken by some Irish historians at the slur thrown, as they think, on the courage of their countrymen, by the hope attributed to the Roman general of being able to effect an easy conquest of Ireland.* But they ought to have recollected that, more than a thousand years after, from the same fatal cause, internal disunion, a far smaller force than Agricola thought requisite for his purpose, laid the ancient Milesian monarchy prostrate at the feet of Britain. At the same time, it cannot but be acknowledged that the conduct of the Romans respecting Ireland, by no means warrants the supposition that they held its conquest to be at all an easy task. The immense advantages tha must attend the acquisition of a country placed so immediately in the neighbourhood of their British possessions, were, we know, fully appreciated by them; nor could any views be more keen and far-sighted than those of Agricola, as unfolded by Tacitus, both as regarded the commercial strength that must accrue to Britain † from the occupation of Ireland, and the strong moral and political influence which the example of this latter country must ever exercise, whether for good or for evil, over the fortunes of her more powerful neighbour. He saw that the Britons, says the histo-

* The estimate of Strabo respecting Britain is, considering all things, still less flattering. To keep her tributary, he says, at least a legion and a few horse would be requisite. Τελαχιστον μεν γαρ, ενος ταγματος χρηζοι αν, και ἱππικη τινος. —Lib. iv. To the courage of the Caledonians, according to this standard, the highest testimony seems to have been paid; as, about the year 230, while one legion was found sufficient to keep all the rest of Britain in subjection, two were employed upon the borders, against this people. — Dio. 55.

† Si quidem Hibernia, medio inter Britanniam atque Hispaniam sita, et Gallico quoque mari opportuna, valentissimam imperii partem magnis invicem usibus miscuerit. — *Agric.* ib.

rian, could never be effectively curbed as long as there was a people yet unmastered in their neighbourhood; and that, to effect this object, the example of liberty must be removed wholly from their sight.* Could the sagacious Agricola again visit this earth, he would find his views, as to the moral influence of the two countries upon each other, fully confirmed; — would see that the oppression of the weaker people by the stronger has produced a re-action which may be, in time, salutary to both; and that already, in all the modes, at least, of struggling for liberty, Ireland has become the practised instructor of England.

With so deep a sense of the great value of the possession, there can hardly be a more convincing proof that the Romans considered its conquest not easy, than the simple fact that they never attempted it; and that, though Britain continued to be harassed by the Irish for near three centuries after, not a single Roman soldier ever set foot on their shores. Even when the flight of their eagles had extended as far as the Orcades, Ireland still remained free.†

How little the Irish themselves were in fear of invasion at this very period, when, as Tacitus informs us, the coast opposite to their shores was lined with Roman troops, may be judged from the expedition to Britain undertaken by their monarch Crimthan, for the purpose of aiding his ancient allies the Picts, in their heroic stand against the legions of Rome. In the course of this visit the Irish monarch is said to have first set the daring example of those predatory incursions into the Roman province by which the Britons continued to be harassed for so long a period after; and having been

* "Idque etiam adversus Britanniam profuturum, si Romana ubique arma, et velut e conspectu libertas tolleretur." — *Agric.* ib. The remarks of La Bletterie, the French translator, upon this chapter, prove how pregnant with the seeds of the future it appeared to him. "Ireland has more harbours and more convenient than any other country in Europe. England has but a small number. Ireland, if she could shake off the British yoke, and form an independent state, would ruin the British commerce; but, to her misfortune, England is too well convinced of this truth."

† "Hibernia Romanis etiam Orcadum insularum dominium tenentibus inaccessa, rarò et tepide ab ullo unquam expugnata et subacta est." — *Gulielmus Parv. Nebriss. Hist. Rer. Angl.*

eminently successful, as it appears, on this occasion, he returned to his dominions laden with a variety of rich and even luxurious booty, the particulars of which have been triumphantly enumerated by the annalists.*

On the death of this monarch, whose name enjoys, as we have seen, the peculiar distinction of being associated in the page of history with those of Tacitus and Agricola, a more than usually troubled period succeeded; during which even that frail and nominal pledge for the security of the public peace, which the descent of the monarchy by inheritance afforded, was set at defiance by a plebeian usurper and his followers, and the whole island made one scene of promiscuous strife and bloodshed. A spirit of revolt among the descendants of the old Belgic tribes, whose chief seat was Connaught, but of whom numbers were also dispersed throughout the other provinces, was the primary cause of all this commotion. The state of Ireland, indeed, at this crisis, shows at how early a period was naturalised on her shores that principle of exclusion and proscription which, in after ages, flourished there so rankly. Under the Milesian or Scotic rule, not merely were the great mass of the old Celtic population held in subjection by the sword, but also the descendants of the foreign settlers, the remains of the conquered Belgic tribes, were wholly excluded from every share in the administration of public affairs, and treated, in every respect, as a servile and helot class. Confederated among themselves by a common sense of humiliation and wrong, these people, having concerted their measures, took the opportunity of a great public assembly, held at Magh-Cru, in Connaught, to strike the first blow of their conspiracy. An indiscriminate massacre of all the princes and chiefs collected on that occasion was the signal of general

* In the long list of articles specified by the Four Masters, as composing this mass of plunder, are mentioned a suit of armour, ornamented with embossed gold and gems, a military cloak with golden fringe, a sword with figures of serpents upon it in chased gold, and a brace of greyhounds, joined together by a silver chain, whose price is estimated, according to the primitive usage of barter, at the value of 300 cows.

revolt among their confederates throughout the kingdom; and being joined also by the larger portion of the Celtic population, to whom the dominant caste was
A. D. 90. odious, they succeeded, with but little opposition, in overturning the legitimate monarchy, and placing one of their own race and rank, Carbre Cat-can, upon the throne.

The five years during which the reign of this usurper lasted are described by the annalists as a period of general gloom and sterility, — "no grain on the stalk, no fruitfulness in the waters, the herds all barren, and but one acorn on the oak." Abandoned wholly to the rule of the rabble, there appeared no hope for the nation of better days; when, unexpectedly, on the death of Carbre, the magnanimity of one individual changed the whole face of affairs. The usurper's son and intended successor, Moran, instead of accepting the bequeathed crown for himself, employed all his influence to have it replaced upon a legitimate brow, and succeeded in restoring the royal race in the person of Feredach, son of Crimthan. The post of Chief Judge of the kingdom bestowed upon him by the monarch, afforded to Moran the means of completing his generous work, and of rendering popular, by a course of unexampled clemency and justice, that restoration of which he had been so disinterestedly the author. To the fame acquired by this judge for his upright decisions, is owing the fable of the Iodhan Moran *, or Moran's Collar, which is said to have given warning, by increased pressure around the neck of the wearer, whenever he was about to pronounce an unjust sentence.

The administration of this honest counsellor suc-

* A golden collar or breast-plate, supposed by Vallancey to be the Iodhain Morain, was found, some years since, in the county of Limerick, twelve feet deep, in a turf bog. "It is made of thin plated gold, and chased in a very neat and workmanlike manner; the breast-plate is single, but the hemispherical ornaments at the top are lined throughout with another thin plate of pure gold."—*Collectan. Hibern.*, No. 13.

The traditional memory of this chain or collar (says O'Flanigan) is so well preserved to this day, that it is a common expression for a person asseverating absolute truth to say, "I would swear by Moran's chain for it." *Trans. of Gaelic Society*, vol. i.

ceeded in earning for his king the honourable title of the Just; and, under their joint sway, the whole country enjoyed a lull of tranquillity as precious as it was rare. This calm, however, was but of brief duration: in the reign of the son of this monarch, Fiach, there broke out a second revolt of the Plebeians, or Attacots *, which raged even more fiercely than the former, and in which the provincial kings took part with the insurgents against the monarchical cause. At A. D. the head of this royal insurrection was Elim, the King 126. of Ulster; and so successful for a time, with the aid of the populace, was his rebellion, that the young monarch, Tuathal, found himself compelled to fly to North Britain, where, taking refuge at the court of his maternal grandfather, the King of the Picts, he determined to await a turn of fortune in his favour. Nor was it long before a great majority of the people themselves, wearied with their own excesses, and moreover chastened into a little reflection by that usual result of such seasons of outbreak, a famine, began to bethink themselves of the claims of their rightful sovereign, the grandson of their favourite king, Feredach the Just. Full of compunction for their ingratitude, they despatched messengers to solicit his return; in prompt obedience to which summons, the monarch landed at the head of a body of Pictish troops, and marching directly to Tara, was elected sovereign amidst the acclamations of his subjects. From thence, taking the field instantly against the rebels, he pursued his course, from victory to victory, throughout the kingdom, till the usurpation was wholly extinguished, the former relations of society every where restored, and the monarch A. D himself hailed with general acclamation under the title 130. of Tuathal, the Acceptable.

This second Plebeian War — to use the term applied to it by Irish historians — having been thus happily ter-

* The Plebeians engaged in this rebellion are, in general, called Attacots, a name corrupted from the compound Irish term Attach-tuatha, which signifies, according to Dr. O'Connor, the Giant Race (Prol. i. 74.); but, according to Mr. O'Reilly's version, simply the Plebeians.

minated, Tuathal convoked, according to custom, the General Assembly of the States at Tara, for the purpose of consulting with them respecting the general affairs and interests of the kingdom, but more especially with a view to the arrangement of the important question of the succession. In a country where kings were so very numerous, and all of them elective, every new demise of royalty was, of course, but a new signal for discord; and the sovereign crown being more than the rest an object of rivalry and ambition, was in proportion the greatest source of strife. Efforts had more than once been made to confine the right of succession to one family, and thereby limit at least the range of the mischief; but the temptation to violate all such restrictions had been found stronger than the oath pledged to observe them. The fatal consequence, however, of the late interruptions of the old Heremonian line of descent seemed to call imperatively for some protection against the recurrence of such disorders; and accordingly Tuathal found no difficulty in inducing the States of the kingdom to proffer their ancient and solemn oath, "by the sun, moon, and stars," that, as long as Ireland should be encircled by the sea, they would acknowledge him alone as their lawful monarch. The same pledges had been given to his predecessors, Heremon and Hugony; and, in all three instances, had been alike violated as soon as the breath had left the royal frame.

Under this monarch the county of Meath, which occupied the centre of the island, was enlarged by a grant of land from each of the other provinces; and, under the name of "The Mensal Lands of the Monarch of Ireland," was appropriated thenceforth as an appanage of the royal domain. To gratify the taste of his people for conventions and festivals, he ordained that, in addition to the Triennial Council of Tara, there should be held annually three assemblies of the kingdom; one at Tlactha, on the night of Samhin, where fires were lighted and sacrifices offered to that divinity; another, on the day of the Baal-fire, at the sacred hill

of Usneach; and a third, on the plains of Taltin, in the Ultonian district*, where those annual sports, introduced in the time of the Damnonian kings, were revived.

A far less creditable sample of his policy was the enormous mulct imposed by him on the province of Leinster, in revenge for the conduct of its ruler, Achy; thus dooming an unoffending people and their posterity to atone for the crimes of one worthless prince. This oppressive fine, known by the name of the Boarian or Boromean tribute, was exacted every second year, and continued to be the cause of much confusion and bloodshed till the year 693; when, in the reign of king Finnacta, through the intercession of St. Moling, it was remitted.

The offence by which Achy, king of Leinster, drew down on that province so many centuries of taxation, though expanded by Keating and Warner into a romance of some pages, may thus, in a few brief sentences, be narrated. Having espoused one of the daughters of the monarch Tuathal, and carried her home to his own kingdom, the Leinster prince, in little more than a year after their union, made his appearance again at Tara; and informing the monarch, with every demonstration of sorrow, that his young queen was dead, obtained permission to pay his addresses to her sister, and succeeded in making her also his bride. On arriving with her royal husband in his own province, the young princess found his queen still living; and so great was her surprise and shame at this discovery, that she but for a few minutes, we are told, survived the shock. The deceived queen also, who, in her ignorance of the real circumstances, had flown with delight to receive her sister, as a visiter, on being informed of the sad truth of the story, took it no less deeply to heart; and, wounded alike by the perfidy of her lord and the melancholy fate of his young victim, pined away and died. For this base act, which ought to

* Tertia apud Talten, in Ultoniæ portione.—*Rer. Hib. Script.* Prol. ii. 79.

have been avenged only upon the unmanly offender, not merely were his subjects, but all their posterity for more than five hundred years, compelled to pay every second year to the reigning monarch that memorable tribute*, which, contested as it was in most instances, superadded to the numerous occasions of collision for ever arising, throughout the country, an almost regularly recurring crisis of confusion and bloodshed.

During the reign of Tuathal, there were appointed courts of municipal jurisdiction for the better regulation of the concerns of tradesmen and artificers; an institution which, could we place reliance on the details relating to it, would imply rather an advanced state of interior traffic and merchandise. One fact which appears pretty certain from these accounts is, that previously to the system now introduced, none of the Milesian or dominant caste had condescended to occupy themselves in trade;—all mechanical employments and handicrafts being left to the descendants of the old conquered tribes; while for the issue of the minor branches of the Milesians were reserved the appointments in the militia of Erin, and the old hereditary offices of antiquaries, bards, physicians, and judges.

Whatever, in other respects, may have been the civilisation of the Irish before the reign of king Feidlim (A. D. 164), their notions of criminal jurisprudence were as yet but rude and barbarous; since we learn, that the old law of retaliation was then for the first time exchanged for the more lenient as well as less demoralising mode of punishment by a mulct or Eric. Some writers, it is true, have asserted† that the very reverse of what has been just stated was the fact;

A. D. 164.

* According to the old history, cited by Keating, called the Fine of Leinster, this tribute, which was paid through the reigns of of forty kings, consisted of 3000 cows, as many hogs and sheep, 3000 copper caldrons, as many ounces of silver, and the same number of mantles. The number of each kind of cattle demanded is stated variously by different authorities; some making it so few as 300 (MacCurtin's Brief Discourse), and others as high as 15,000.—MS. quoted by Dr. O'Connor.

† See Warner (History of Ireland, vol. i. book 4.), whose confused notions respecting this law are adopted, and rendered still "worse confounded," by the author of the Dissertations on the Hist. of Ireland, sect. 11.

and that Feidlim, finding the Law of Compensation already established, introduced the Lex Talionis in its stead. But this assuredly would have been to retrograde rather than to advance in civilisation ; — one of the first steps towards civility, in the infancy of all nations, having been the substitution, in criminal justice, of fines proportionate to the offences *, for the savage law of retaliation and the right of private revenge. Should even this improved stage of jurisprudence, under which murders of the darkest kind might be compounded for, appear sufficiently barbarous, it should be recollected that neither the Greeks † at the time of the Trojan war, nor the English under their great ruler Alfred, had yet advanced a step farther.

To Feidlim the Legislator succeeded, after a short period, his son Con of the Hundred Battles ; a prince whose long reign was devoted, as his distinctive title imports, to a series of conflicts which seem to have been as various in their success, as they were murderous and devastating in their consequences. From the family of this hero descended that race of chieftains who, under the title of the Dalriadic kings, supplied Albany, the modern

* The following is Spenser's account of the Law of the Eric, as existing among the Irish. Having remarked that, in the Brehon Law, there were "many things repugning both to God's law and man's," he adds, "as for example, in the case of murder, the Brehon, that is, their Judge, will compound between the murderer and the friends of the party murdered, which prosecute the action, that the malefactor shall give unto them, or to the child or wife of him that is slain, a recompense which they call an Eriach ; by which wild law of theirs many murders amongst them are made up and smothered."—*View of the State of Ireland.*

Both by Spenser and sir John Davis this custom of compounding the crime of homicide by a fine is spoken of as peculiar to the Irish ; and the latter writer even grounds upon it a most heavy charge against that people ; either forgetting that this mode of composition for manslaughter formed a part of the Anglo-Saxon code, or else wilfully suppressing that fact for the purpose of aggravating his list of charges against the old Brehon law. As there will occur other opportunities for considering this question, I shall here only remark that, however it may have been customary among the ancient Pagan Irish to punish homicide by a mulct, or Eric, alone, there are proofs that, in later times, and before the coming of the English, not only was wilful murder, but also the crimes of rape and robbery, made legally punishable by death. — See *Dissertations on the Laws of the ancient Irish, Collectan.* vol. i.—*O'Reilly, on the Brehon Laws*, sect. 8. —*Ledwich, Antiquities.*—*Hume*, vol. i. Appendix.

† Iliad, l. ix. v. 630., where, by Homer, the blood-fine is called a penalty or mulct, and the relatives of the murdered person are represented as satisfied with the imposition.

A. D. 258. Scotland, with her first Scotish rulers; Carbry Riada,—the son of Conary the Second by the daughter of the monarch Con,—having been the chief who, about the middle of the third century, established that Irish settlement in Argyleshire*, which, taking the name of its princely founder, grew up, in the course of time, into the kingdom of Dalriada; and finally, on the destruction of the Picts by Keneth Mac Alpine, became the kingdom of all Scotland.

The incursions of the Irish into those northern parts of Britain had commenced at a very remote period; and, in the reigns of Olmucad, Tigernhmas, Reatch, and other monarchs, such expeditions to the coast of Albany are recorded to have taken place.† Without depending, however, solely on Irish authorities, the language of the Roman panegyrist, Eumenius, in extolling the victory gained in Britain by Constantius Chlorus, would fully suffice to prove that, previously to the coming of Cæsar, the neighbourhood of Ireland had been found troublesome to the Britons, and that they had been "accustomed"— for such is the phrase used by the orator — to invasions from that quarter.‡ But the first permanent settlement of the Irish in North Britain was the small colony, just mentioned, under Carbry Riada; which, fixing its abode in a part of those regions inhabited previously only by the Picts, or Caledonians, acquired, as Bede tells us, partly by friendship and partly by the sword, a settled home in the country §; while their founder, already possessing, in the north of

* In these Scoto-Irish chiefs of Argyleshire, says Sir Walter Scott, historians "must trace the original roots of the royal line."—History of Scotland, vol. i. chap. 2.

† These early incursions are thus acknowledged by Buchanan: — "Nec semel Scotorum ex Hibernia transitum in Albium factum nostri annales referunt." Hist. Scot. l. 2.

‡ "Adhuc natio (Britannica) etiam tunc rudis et solis Britanni Pictis modo et Hibernis adsueti hostibus, adhuc seminudi, facile Romanis armis signisque cesserunt."—*Panegyric. Vet.*

§ "Procedente autem tempore Britannia post Britones et Pictos, tertiam Scotorum nationem in Pictorum parte recepit, qui, duce Reuda, de Hibernia egressi, vel amicitia vel ferro, sibimet inter eos sedes quas hactenus habent vindicarunt, a quo videlicet duce usque hodie Dalreudini vocantur."—L. i. c. 1.

Ireland, a seignorial territory named, after himself, Dalriada*, transmitted the same name to the infant kingdom he was thus the means of establishing in Albany.†

As at this period, and for a long course of centuries after, the name of Scoti, or Scots, was applied exclusively to the Irish, I shall, to avoid confusion in speaking of the country now known as Scotland, call it either North Britain, or else by the name which it bore in those early days, Alba, or Albany.

The most tedious, as well as most sanguinary of the many wars in which the monarch of the Hundred Battles was engaged, was that maintained by him against the heroic Mogh-Nuad, king of the province of Leinster, during which the latter carried away the palm of victory in no less than ten successive pitched battles.

* This territory, which comprehended the north, north-west, and part of the south of the county of Antrim, is sometimes confounded with Dalaradia, which, as described by Harris, comprehended the south-east parts of the same county, and the greatest part, if not all, of the county of Down.

† For the truth of this important and now undoubted historical fact, we need but refer to the admissions of Scotch writers themselves. After mentioning the notice, by Ammianus, of Scots in Britain, A. D. 360, the judicious Innes adds, "This may very well agree with the placing the coming in of Eocha Riada (the same as Bede's Reuda), the first leader of the colony of the Scots into Britain, about the beginning of the third age. It is like he brought over at first but a small number, not to give jealousy to the ancient inhabitants of these parts, the Caledonians; but in the space of one hundred, or about one hundred and fifty years, that passed betwixt the time of their first coming in, and their being mentioned by Ammian, A. D. 360, they might have so increased both within themselves, and by accession of new auxiliaries from Ireland, that the Caledonians or Picts, finding them serviceable in their wars against the Romans and provincial Britons, were easily disposed to enlarge their possessions."—*Crit. Essay*, vol. ii. Dissert. ii. chap. 2.

Thus Pinkerton, also, whose observations prove him to have been thoroughly well informed upon the subject:—"Concerning the origin of the Dalreudini of Ireland, all the Irish writers, Keating, Usher, O'Flaherty, &c. &c. are concordant, and say the name sprung from Carbry Riada. Beda, a superior authority to all the Irish annalists put together, informs us that this very Riada led also the first colony of Scots to North Britain. So that the point stands clear, independently of the lights which Kennedy and O'Connor throw upon it."—Enquiry, part iv. chap. 2. Chalmers, also, concurs in the same view. "The new settlers," he adds, "continued, to the age of Bede, to be commonly called from their original district (in Ireland) the Dalreudini, though they will be herein denominated the Scoto-Irish." —*Caledonia*, vol. i. book ii. chap 6.

But the most ancient testimony of the Scots of North Britain to the descent of their kings from the royal Irish race of Conary, is to be found in a Gaelic Duan, or Poem, written by the court bard of Malcolm III. (about A. D. 1057), which has been pronounced the most ancient monument of Dalriadic history remaining. For this very curious genealogical poem, see Ogyg. Vind. chap. x. Rer. Hibern. Script. prol. i. Pinkerton's Enquiry, part iv. chap. 5.

In consequence of these numerous defeats, to so low an ebb was the power of the monarch reduced, that his antagonist became at length possessor of one half of the kingdom. A new division of the country accordingly took place*, which continued, nominally at least, to be recognised to a late period, assigning the northern part, under the name of Leath-Cuinn, or Con's half, to the monarch; while the southern, under the designation of Leath-Mogh, or Mogh's half, fell to the jurisdiction of the crown of Munster.

A. D. 254. The most accomplished of all the Milesian princes, whether as legislator, soldier, or scholar, was, according to the general report of all his historians, the monarch Cormac Ulfadha, who flourished about the middle of the third century, and was the only one of the few sensible princes whom the line of Milesius produced that was able to inspire enough of respect for his institutions to secure their existence beyond his own lifetime. To his munificence and love of learning the country was indebted, it is said, for the foundation and endowment of three Academies at Tara: in the first of which the science of war was taught; in the second, historical literature; while the third academy was devoted to the cultivation of jurisprudence. It was a remarkable tribute to the powerful influences of literature (if the learning of the Fileas and Seanachies may be dignified with that name), that the various schemes of state reform brought forward by these legislators all commenced with the reformation of the Literary Order. Among the rest, the monarch Cormac, who was himself a distinguished ornament of that class, applied his earliest care to the correcting of those abuses which had, in the course of time, deteriorated its spirit. Under his auspices, too, a general revision of the annals of the kingdom was entered upon; and the national records which, since the days of the illustrious Ollamh, had been

* According to O'Flaherty, this division of the kingdom continued in reality but a year; — "in reputation, however," says Harris, "it subsists among the Irish to this day."

kept regularly, it is said, in the Psalter of Tara, received such corrections and improvements as the growth of knowledge since that remote period must have suggested. It is even alleged that, in the course of this reign, was introduced that mode of ascertaining the dates of regal successions, called Synchronism, which consists in collating the times of the respective reigns with those of contemporary Princes in other countries. This form of chronology was adopted also by an Irish historian of the eleventh century, named Flann, whose annals, formed upon this principle, are said to be still extant in the valuable library at Stowe. It is, however, not easy to conceive, that so general a knowledge of foreign history as this task of synchronising seems necessarily to imply, and which, even in writers so late as Tigernach and Flann*, is sufficiently remarkable, could have been found among a people so entirely secluded from most of the other European nations, as were the Irish in the time of their king Cormac.

The abdication of the supreme power by this monarch, in the full vigour of his age and faculties, was the consequence, it appears, of an ancient law or custom of the country, which forbade that any one who was affected with a personal blemish should hold possession of the throne ; and as, in resisting a rebellious attack on his palace, he incurred the loss of an eye†, this accomplished

* Flannus Junior, Flann *Mainistreach* cognominatus, cujus *Synchrona* pariter extant in vetusto codice membraneo ejusdem Bibliothecæ, No. i. quique obiit anno 1056, plura itidem subministravit, quibus traditio historica auctoritate coætanea fulcitur.—*Rer. Hibern. Script. Ep. Nunc.*

A list of no less than fourteen poems attributed to this synchronist, who is known also by the title of Flann of Bute, is given, in Mr. O'Reilly's chronological list of Irish writers, as being still preserved in the Book of Leacan, in the O'Cleary's Book of Invasions, and other such collections.

† We find this accident otherwise accounted for, in a curious narrative, containing some picturesque circumstances, which general Vallancey gives as a translation from an old Irish law book. Ceallach Mac-Cormac, a kinsman, as it appears, of the monarch, having carried away, by force, the niece of another Irish chieftain, the latter, determined to take revenge for the insult, hurried to Tara, the royal residence, where the offender was then a guest. "He made directly towards Tara," says the MS., "where he arrived after sunset. Now, there was a law prohibiting any person from coming armed into Tara after sunset, so he went unarmed, and, taking down Cormac's spear from the place where it hung in the hall of Tara, he killed Ceallach Mac-Cormac on the spot, and drawing back the

monarch was thereby disqualified from longer retaining the sovereignty. In the law thus enforced may be observed another instance, rather remarkable, of coincidence with the rules and customs of the East. In a like manner, we read in the Persian history, that the son of the monarch Kobad, having, by a similar accident, lost the use of an eye, was in consequence precluded, by an old law of the country, from all right of succession to the throne.

The nature of the religious opinions held by this monarch have been made a subject of some discussion; and the reverend librarian of Stowe has thought it no waste of his learned leisure to devote a distinct chapter to the consideration of "the Religion of king Cormac." By some writers it is alleged, that he was converted to Christianity seven years before his death; being, it is added, the third person in Ireland who professed that faith before the coming of St. Patrick. That this prince was enlightened enough to reject the superstitions of the Druids, and that, in consequence of his free-thinking on such subjects, he had that powerful body opposed to him throughout the whole of his reign, there appears little reason to doubt; but whether he substituted any purer form of faith for that which he had repudiated, is a point not so easily ascertained. A circumstance recorded of him, however, shows how vigorously he could repress intolerance and cruelty, even when directed against a body of religionists to whom he was himself opposed. Among the ancient institutions of Tara was a sort of College of Sacred Virgins, whose vocation it appears to have been, like the Dryads or fortune-tellers among the Gauls, to divine the future for the indulgence of the superstitious or the credulous. In one of those incursions, or forays, of which the territory of the monarch was so often the object, the place

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spear with great force, the ferrol struck out Cormac's eye, and wounded the Reactaire, or Judge of Tara, in the back, of which he died.—*Fragment of the Brehon Laws.*

where these holy Druidesses resided *, and which bore the name of "The Retreat until Death," was attacked by the troops of the king of Leinster, and the whole of its sacred inmates, together with their handmaids, most inhumanly massacred.† This brutal sacrilege the monarch punished by putting twelve of the Lagenian chieftains most concerned in it to death, and exacting rigorously the Boarian tribute from the province to which they belonged.

In the course of this reign considerable additions are said to have been made to that body of laws, or legal axioms, which had been, from time to time, compiled, under the name of Celestial Judgments; and, among other contributors to this great legislative work, is mentioned Finn Mac-Cumhal — or, as known to modern ears, Fingal — the son-in-law of the monarch Cormac, and general of the famed Fianna Eirinn, or ancient Irish militia. It has been the fate of this popular Irish hero, after a long course of traditional renown in his own country, where his name still lives, not only in legends and songs, but in the yet more indelible record of scenery connected with his memory ‡, to have been, all at once, transferred by adoption to another country, and start,

* "Dryades erant Gallicanæ mulieres fatidicæ." — *Salmas. in Lamprid.* "Dicebat quodem tempore Aurelianum Gallicanas consuluisse Dryadas." — *Vopisc. in Aurel.* We have Toland's authority for there having been Druidesses in Ireland; and Gealcossa's Mount, as he tells us, situated in Inisowen, in the county of Donegal, was so called from a female Druid of that name. "Her name," he adds, "is of the Homerical strain, signifying The White-legged. On this hill is her grave, and hard by is her temple, being a sort of unmutative Stonehenge, which many of the old Irish dare not, even at this day, any way profane." — *Letters to Lord Molesworth.*

† Annal. IV. Magist. ad ann. 241.

‡ "I must not omit that, in the centre of this county (the county of Donegal), the cloud-capt mountain of Alt Ossoin presides, and around him is the whole scenery of Ossian and Fingal, which has been so beautifully described by Mr. Macpherson, and to the northward of Lough Dearg are the mountains, caverns, and lakes of Finn, or Fingal." — *Collectan. de Reb. Hibern.*, No. xii.

A writer in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy (vol. xv.), mentions a great rock in the county of Meath, under shelter of which Finn and his faithful wolf-dog, Brann, once rested from the chase; and it is added that on the top of the hill of Shanthamon, in the county of Cavan, may be seen his "Fingers," in the shape of five enormous stones, each about five feet high, and of four tons weight. A similar tribute has been paid to our Irish heroes by that country of poesy and song which has adopted them as her own. "All over the Highlands," says sir John Sinclair (Dissert. on

under a new but false shape, in a fresh career of fame. Besides being himself an illustrious warrior and bard, this chief transmitted also to his descendants, Oisin and Osgar, the gifts of heroism and song; and died, by the lance, as we are told, of an assassin, in the year 273.

In the humble abode where king Cormac passed his latter days,—a thatched cabin, as it is said, at Aicill, or Kells *,—he produced those works which entitle his name to a place in the list of Royal Authors. "The Advice to a King," which he wrote for the instruction of his son, Carbre, on resigning to him the throne, is said to have been extant so late as the seventeenth century †; as well as a Poem, likewise attributed to him, on the virtues of the number Three,—somewhat resembling, most probably, the Gryphus of the poet Ausonius on the same mysterious subject.

Among the remarkable events that passed during the reign of this monarch, it is worthy of mention that, after having defeated the Ultonians, in a great battle at Granard, he banished numbers of the people of that province to the Isle of Man and the Hebrides. That the island of Eubonia, as Man was then called, belonged in early times to Ireland, appears from Ptolemy, by whom it is marked as a dependency of that country; and, in a

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the Authenticity, &c.), the names of Ossian, Fingal, Comhal, Trenmor, Cuchullin, are still familiar, and held in the greatest respect. Straths or valleys, mountains, rocks, rivers, are named after them. There are a hundred places in the Highlands and Isles which derive their name from the Feinne, and from circumstances connected with their history."

* In his first version, from an Irish MS, of the details of the accident by which Cormac lost his eye, General Vallancey printed and published the following sentence, "But the famous Aicill performed a cure for his eye." Finding subsequently, however, that Aicill was not a physician, but a small town in the county of Meath, he thus corrected the passage, "Cormac was sent to Aicill to be cured." This mistake of the great Irish scholar has been made the subject of some dull facetiousness in Doctor Campbell's Strictures, Sect. 3.

† Bishop Nicholson has, by an oversight, transferred both this work and the son for whom it was written, to Cormac Mac-Cuillenan, the Royal Compiler of the Psalter of Cashel, who died in the beginning of the tenth century. The confusion is carried still further by representing the latter also as having died in "a thatched house at Anachiul, in Ceananus, near Tara."—*Hist. Lib. Appendix.*

work attributed to the cosmographer Æthicus, we are told, "The Isle of Man, as well as Hibernia, is inhabited by tribes of the Scots."* In the time of St. Patrick it was still an Irish island, and the favourite resort of such holy persons as wished to devote themselves to a life of seclusion and prayer.

It was in the reign of Carbre, the son and successor of Cormac, that the famous Fianna Eirinn, or Militia of Erin, whose achievements formed so often the theme of our ancient romances and songs, was, in consequence of the dissensions within its own body, as well as of the formidable degree of power which it had attained, put down summarily by force. This national army had been for some time divided into two rival septs, the Clanna Boisgne, commanded by Oisin, the son of Finn, and the Clanna Morna, which was at this time protected by the king of Munster; and the rights claimed by the former sept, to take precedence of all other military tribes, had been long a source of violent feuds between their respective chieftains. A celebrated contention of this nature between Goll and Finn Mac-Cumhal, near the palace of the latter at Almhain†, had risen to such a height that it could only be appeased, we are told, by the intervention of the bards, who, shaking the Chain of Silence between the chiefs, succeeded in calming their strife.‡ To such a pitch, however, had the presumption of the Clanna Boisgne at length arrived, that in the reign of Carbre, having had the audacity to defy the

* "Hibernia a Scotorum gentibus colitur.—Monasia insula æque ac Hibernia a Scotorum gentibus habitatur.—*Cosmog.*

† "Situated in Leinster, on the summit of Allen, or rather, as the natives of that country pronounce it, Allowin. The village and bog of Allen have thence derived their name. There are still the remains of some trenches on the top of the hill, where Finn Mac Cumhal and his Fians were wont to celebrate their feasts."—*Dr. Young, Trans. Irish Acad.*

‡ "The Book of Howth affirms that, in the battle between the Fenii and Carbre, the Fenii were all destroyed, Oisin excepted; and that he lived till the time of St. Patrick, to whom he related the exploits of the Fenii."—*Relics of Irish Poetry.* See also *Walker's Irish Bards.* "It would be tedious," adds Miss Brooke, "to relate the various causes assigned by different writers for this battle. Historians in general lay the chief blame upon the Fenii; and the poets, taking part with their favourite heroes, cast the odium upon Carbre, then monarch of Ireland. The fault, most likely, was mutual."

throne itself, they were attacked by the united force of almost all the royal troops of the kingdom (the king of Munster alone taking part with the rebellious Fians), and a battle, memorable for its extent of carnage, ensued, in which Osgar, the son of Oisin, or Ossian, was slain by the monarch's own hand, and scarcely a man of the Clanna Boisgne escaped the slaughter of that day. The victorious monarch, too, surviving but a short time his dreadful combat with Osgar, was himself numbered among the slain.

The fame of this fatal battle of Gabhra, and the brave warriors who fell in it, continued long to be a favourite theme of the Irish bards and romancers; and upon no other foundation than the old songs respecting the heroes of this combat, mixed up with others relating to chieftains of a still more ancient date, has been raised that splendid fabric of imposture which, under the assumed name of Ossian, has for so long a period dazzled and deceived the world*; being not more remarkable for the skill and fancy displayed in its execution than for the intrepidity with which its author presumed on the general ignorance and credulity of his readers.

The close connection of this work of Macpherson with the History of Ireland, as well as of North Britain, at this period, and the false views which it is meant to convey of the early relations between the two countries, demand for it a degree of notice in these pages to which, as a mere work of fiction, however brilliant, it could not have any claim. Such notice, too, appears the more called for from the circumstance of this fabrication forming but one of a long series of attempts, on the part of Scotish writers, to confound and even reverse the historical affinities between the two countries, for the purpose of claiming, as the property of Scotland, not only those high heroic names and romantic traditions which belong to the twilight period of Irish history we are

* "There are at least three Poems, of considerable antiquity, in Irish, written on the battle of Gabhra, upon which Mr. Macpherson founded his poem of 'Temora.'"—*Essay to investigate the Authenticity*, &c., by Edward O'Reilly, Esq.

now considering, but also the most distinguished of those numerous saints and scholars, who are known, at a later and more authentic period, to have illustrated our annals. This notable scheme, to which the community of the name of Scotia between the two countries afforded peculiar facilities, commenced so early as the thirteenth century, when, on the claim advanced by Edward I. to a feudal superiority over Scotland, it became an object with the people of that country to assert the independency of the Scotish crown, and when for the first time pretensions were set up by them to a scheme of antiquities of their own, partly borrowed from that of the parent country, but chiefly intended to supersede and eclipse it.

The pretensions but faintly sketched out at that crisis, assumed, in the hands of succeeding chroniclers, a more decided shape; till at length, with the aid of the forged authorities brought forward by Hector Boece*, an addition of from forty to five and forty Scotish kings were at once interpolated in the authentic Irish list of the Dalriadic rulers; by which means the commencement of the Scotish kingdom in Britain was removed from its true historical date,—about the beginning, as we shall see, of the sixth century,—to as far back as three hundred and thirty years before the Incarnation.

It is worthy of remark, too, that far more in political objects and designs than in any romantic or vain-glorious ambition, is to be found the source of most of these efforts on the part of the Scotch to construct for themselves this sort of spurious antiquity. We have seen that the first notions of such a scheme arose out of the claims set up by Edward I. to a right of superiority over Scotland; and as the English monarch had backed his pretensions by reference to a long line of kings, through which he professed to have descended from Brutus, Locrine, Albanact, &c., the Scotch, in their

* Innes acquits this countryman Boece of having been himself the author of this forgery.—Ch. ii. art. ii. §8.

counter-memorials*, deemed it politic to have recourse to a similar parade of antiquity, and brought forward, for the first time, their additional supply of ancient kings, to meet the exigencies of the occasion. In like manner, when, at a later period, their eloquent Buchanan lent all the attractions of his style to adorn and pass into currency the absurd legends of Hector Boece respecting the forty kings, it was not that he conceived any glory or credit could redound to his country from such forgeries†, but because the examples he found in these pretended records of the deposition and punishment of kings by their subjects, fell in with the principles at that time afloat respecting the king-deposing power, and afforded precedents for that right of revolt against tyranny which he had himself so strenuously and spiritedly advocated.‡

From this period the boasted antiquities of the British Scots were suffered to slumber undisturbed till, on the appearance of the work of the Bishop of St. Asaph, entitled an Historical Account of Ancient Church Government in Great Britain and Ireland, when that learned prelate having occasion to notice the fabricated succession of Scotish kings from an imaginary Fergus I., exposed the falsehood and utter absurdity of the whole fable. This simply historical statement called forth a champion of the forty phantom kings, in the person of Sir George Mackenzie, the King's Advocate for Scotland, who, resenting warmly, as "a degree of

* These memorials, which were addressed to the Pope, are to be found in Hearne's edition of Fordun. "Those productions of the Scots (says Innes), I mean as to their remote antiquities, ought to be considered such as they truly were, as the pleadings of advocates, who commonly make no great difficulty to advance with great assurance all that makes for the advantage of their cause or clients, though they have but probable grounds and sometimes bare conjectures to go upon." — *Critical Essay.*

† It is but fair to observe, that by none of these writers was so bold a defiance of the voice of history ventured upon as to deny that the Scots of Albany had originally passed over from Ireland. Even sir George Mackenzie, who endeavours to set aside the relationship as much as possible, says, — "We acknowledge ourselves to have come last from Ireland;" while of all those Scotish writers who preceded him in the same track, John Major, Hector Boece, Leslie, Buchanan, not a single one has thought of denying that the Scots were originally of Irish extraction. See *Ogygia Vindicated*, chap. 3.

‡ In his work *De Jure regni apud Scotos.*

leze-majesté," this curtailment of the royal line, went so far as to identify the honour and safety of the British monarchy with the credit of the fabulous kings of Boece.* It is, indeed, not a little curious to observe, that while political views and objects continued to be the motive of most of this zeal for the antiquities of their country, the ground taken by the Scotish champions was now completely changed; and whereas Boece, and, far more knowingly, Buchanan, had supported the forgery of the forty kings for the sake of the weapons which it had furnished them against the sacredness of hereditary monarchy, Sir George Mackenzie, on the contrary, overlooking, or rather, perhaps, not acknowledging this alleged tendency of the Scotish fictions, upheld them as so essentially connected with the very foundations of the British monarchy, that to endeavour to bring them into any disrepute was, in his eyes, a species of high treason.

The masterly hand of Bishop Stillingfleet gave the last blow to that shadowy fabric of which Sir George Mackenzie had proved himself but a feeble defender; and the pretensions of the Scots to a high line of antiquity, independent of that of their ancestors, the Irish, fell, never again to rise in the same ostensible shape. But there remained another mode of undermining the Scotic history of Ireland, or rather of confounding it with that of the Scotia derived from her, so as to transfer to the offspring much of the parent's fame; and of this Macpherson, with much ingenuity, and a degree of hardihood almost without parallel, availed himself. Counting upon the obscurity of Irish history at the commencement of the Christian era, he

* See his Letter to the Lord Chancellor, wherein Sir George "admires that any of the subjects of Great Britain did not think it a degree of lese-majesty to injure and shorten the royal line of their kings."

In speaking of the Scoto-Irish Chiefs of Argyleshire, sir Walter Scott, says (Hist. of Scotland, vol. i. ch. 2.), "Not to incur the charge of leze-majesté, brought by Sir G. Mackenzie against Dr. Stillingfleet, for abridging the royal pedigree by some links, we will briefly record, that by the best authorities twenty-eight of these Dalriadic kings or chiefs reigned successively in Argyleshire." It was, however, not in reference to the Dalriadic kings that sir George's remark was made, nor was it directed against Stillingfleet, but against Lloyd, the learned bishop of St. Asaph.

saw that a supposed migration of Caledonians into that country in the first century, would not only open to him a wide and safe field for the fanciful creations he meditated, but would also be the means of appropriating to his own country the romantic fame of those early heroes and bards, those traditional subjects of story and song, which are, after all, more fondly clung to by every ancient people, than even their most authentic and most honourable history.

It is true this adoption and appropriation by the British Scots, of the sóngs and traditions of the Irish, had been carried on for ages before the period when it was so expertly turned to account by Macpherson; being the natural result of the intimate intercourse so long subsisting between the two countries. The original fragments, indeed, of Erse poetry, which formed the foundation of most of his Epics, were, in fact, but versions of old Irish songs relating to the Fenian heroes *, which, though attributed to the poet Oisin, were the productions of bards of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and, finding their way among the highlanders of Britain, from the close connection between the two countries, came, in the course of time, to be adopted by them, both heroes and songs, as their own.†

* For the best account of these Fenian Poems, and of the general nature of their style and subjects, the reader is referred to an able essay on the authenticity of Ossian's Poems, by Dr. William Hamilton Drummond, in the 16th volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. A MS. collection of the Fenian tales and songs is said to be in the possession of Mr. James Hardiman, the intelligent author of the History of Galway.

† Even among the Lowlanders, too, the traditional renown of Finn and his heroes had long made itself known, as the following instance proves: — When Bruce was defeated by MacDougal, Lord of Lorn, he placed himself in the rear of his retreating followers, and checked the pursuit. "Behold him," said MacDougal to one of his leaders, "he protects his followers against us, as Gaul, the son of Morni, defended his tribe against the rage of Fingal." — Quoted from Barbour, in an article of the Edinburgh Review (attributed, I believe justly, to the pen of sir Walter Scott) on the Report of the Highland Society, vol. vi. That the true birthplace, however, of Finn and his heroes was sometimes acknowledged even in Scotland, appears from two verses, quoted in the same article, from the old Scotch poet, Douglas: —

> "Great Gow Mac Morn, and Fin Mac Coul, and how
> They suld be Goddis in Ireland, as men say."

Neither were the English ignorant of our claims to these ancient heroes

The various adaptations and corruptions of the original ballads by which this process of naturalisation was effected, and the chieftains Finn, Oisin, Osgar, Cuchullin, Goll Mac-Morn were all in the Erse songs converted into Highland heroes, have been pointed out by critics familiar with the dialects of both countries; and though some of the variations from the original ballads arose, doubtless, from the want of a written standard, there occur others — such as the omission frequently of the name of Ireland, and of St. Patrick — which could have arisen from no other cause than a deliberate intention to deceive. *

In all such prepense modes of falsification, Macpherson improved boldly on his rude originals †; though still with so little regard to consistency, as often to justify the suspicion, that his great success was owing fully as much to the willingness of others to be deceived, as to his own talent in deceiving. The conversion of Finn, an Irish chieftain of the third century, into a Caledonian "King of Morven," and the chronological blunder of giving him Cuchullin for a contemporary, who had

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and bards, as may be seen from the following passage quoted by Camden, in speaking of the Irish: — "They think the souls of the deceased are in communion with famous men of those places, of whom they retain many stories and sonnets, as of the giants Fin Mac-Huyle, O'Shin Mac-Owin; and they say, through illusion, that they often see them."

The origin of the addition of the word Gal to Finn's name is thus satisfactorily explained: — "*Gal*, the latter part of the compound, signifies a *stranger*, and being applied by Scotchmen to Fin, the son of Cumhal, it affords a decisive proof that they did not consider him as their countryman."—*Essay on Ossian, by the Rev. Doctor Drummond.*

* Of one of these Erse Poems, a Conversation between Ossian and St. Patrick, Dr. Young says, "The Highland Sgeulaiches have been very busy in corrupting this poem, partly of necessity from the want of a written standard . . . . . From their vain desire of attributing Fin Mac-Cumhal and his heroes to Scotland, they seem to have intentionally corrupted it in some passages, as may be seen by comparing the Erse copies with each other. Thus, in the verse before us, the word Ireland is omitted." Again, Dr. Young remarks, "The Highland Sgeulaiches have taken the liberty of totally perverting this stanza, and changing it into another, which might make Fin Mac-Cumhal their own countryman."

† The late Doctor Young, Bishop of Clonfert, who, in the year 1784, made a tour to the Highlands of Scotland, for the purpose of seeing the original poems from which Macpherson had constructed his Epics, has accused him of altering the dates of his originals, of attributing to them a much higher antiquity than belongs to them, of suppressing the name of St. Patrick, and, in short, of corrupting and falsifying, by every means, even the few scanty fragments of Irish poetry he could produce to sanction his imposture.

flourished more than two centuries before, are errors, which, gross as they are, might, under cover of the darkness of Irish history, at that period, have been expected to pass unnoticed. But his representing this Finn, or Fingal, as in the year 208 commanding the Caledonians against Caracalla *, and then bringing him forward again, at the interval of more than a century, to contend with Cathmor in single combat, is one of those daring flights of improbability and absurdity, upon which none but a writer so conscious of his own powers of imposture could have ventured. †

It is true that, in most of those poems, attributed to our bard Oisin, which furnished the grounds, or rather pretext, for the elaborate forgeries of Macpherson, the very same licence of anachronism is found to prevail. The son of Finn, in these rude and spurious productions, has not only his life prolonged as far as the fifth century for the convenience of conversing with St. Patrick, but finds himself engaged, so late as the commencement of the twelfth, in single combat with the Norwegian king, Magnus. It is to be remembered, however, that these vagaries of chronology occur in detached pieces of poetry, written by different authors, and at different periods; whereas the pretended epics of Ossian are the production professedly of one great and known poet, at a defined period of history; and yet, in the very face of this assumed character, abound with such

* See Gibbon's detection of the anachronism of Macpherson respecting Caracalla (vol. i. chap. vi.);—where, however, he expresses himself with a degree of deference and timidity, well deserving of Hume's rebuke to him on his credulity. "You are, therefore," says his shrewd friend, "over and above indulgent to us in speaking of the matter with hesitation."

† The primary and insurmountable argument against even the possibility of their authenticity, is thus well stated by Hume:—"It is, indeed, strange that any man of sense could have imagined it possible that above twenty thousand verses, along with numberless historical facts, could have been preserved by oral tradition during fifty generations, by the rudest, perhaps, of all the European nations, the most necessitous, the most turbulent, and the most unsettled. Where a supposition is so contrary to common sense, any positive evidence of it ought never to be regarded." — Letter to Gibbon, in *Gibbon's Memoirs of his own Life and Writings.*

So slow, however, has the delusion been in passing away, that so late as the year 1825, when Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary was published, we find the author of that work boasting of Ossian as "the great poet of the Gael," and citing him as authority for the early manners and customs of the Highlanders.

monstrous anachronisms, such utter confusion of times, places, persons, and manners as renders the belief, for so long a period, in the authenticity of such a work, one of the most startling marvels in all literary history.

To mention but two or three more instances in which this personator of a bard of the third century forestalls the manners and customs of a far later period, we find him bestowing on his Irish heroes, some centuries before the coat of mail was introduced, bright corselets of steel *; and describing castles as existing in Ireland, at a time when the most stately palaces of her kings were as yet constructed but of wood. In still more wanton defiance both of history and common sense he brings together the expedition of Caracalla at the commencement of the third century, that of Carausius at its close, and the invasions of the Danes and Norwegians, in the ninth and tenth centuries, as all of them contemporary events.

Not content with the many violations of chronology that have been mentioned, the pretended translator of Ossian takes no less liberties both with geography and topography, transporting Moylena, for instance, the scene of two famous battles, from the King's County to Ulster, and transferring even Teamor, or Tara, the celebrated residence of the ancient monarchs, from its natural site in Meath to the same northern province.† While thus lavishing upon Ulster glories that do not belong to it, he has, on the other hand, robbed it of some peculiarly its own; and passing in silence over the memorable Emania, the seat of the old Ultonian kings, he has chosen to substitute some castle of Tura, his own invention, in its place. Instead of Craove-Roe, too, the military school of the Red-branch Knights near Emania, he has called up some structure, under the

* "The Irish annalists speak of the Danes in the latter end of the eighth century, as being covered with armour; but they never speak of the Irish troops being so equipped. Giraldus Cambrensis describes particularly the arms of the Irish, but says not one word of their wearing armour." —*Essay upon Ossian, by Edward O'Reilly, Esq.*

† For a more detailed exposure of these and many other such blunders, see Dissertation on the First Migrations and Final Settlement of the Scots in North Britain, by Mr. O'Connor of Belanagare.

exotic name of Muri's Hall, which is no less the baseless fabric of his own fancy than the castle of Tura.*

It may be thought that animadversions of this nature upon a romance still so popular, belong more properly to the department of criticism than of history. But a work which Gibbon, in tracing the fortunes of Imperial Rome, has turned aside from his stately march to notice, may well lay claim to some portion of attention from the humble historian of the country to which all the Chiefs so fabulously commemorated by it, in reality belonged. Had the aim of the forgery been confined to the ordinary objects of romance, namely, to delight and interest, any such grave notice of its anachronisms and inconsistencies would have been here misplaced. But the imposture of Macpherson was, at the least, as much historical as poetical. His suppression, for it could hardly have been ignorance†, of the true history of the Irish settlement in Argyleshire, so early as the middle of the third century, — a fact fatal to the whole groundwork of his pretended Scotish history, — could have proceeded only from a deliberate system of deception, having for its object so far to reverse the historical relationship between

* The fortress of Tura is indeed mentioned by Mr. Beauford, who, as an authority, however, is of little more value than Macpherson himself: — "In the neighbourhood of Cromla," says this writer, "stood the rath or fortress of Tura, called by the Irish writers Alich Neid." — *Ancient Topography of Ireland.*

† Some of his own countrymen think more charitably of him. "Above all (says a writer already referred to), Macpherson was ignorant of the real history of the colony of the Dalriads, or Irish Scots, who possessed themselves of a part of Argyleshire, in the middle of the third century; an indubitable fact, inconsistent with his whole system." — *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xvi., *Report of the Highland Society.* We are, however, justified in imputing to Macpherson something much worse than ignorance, when, in works professedly historical and argumentative, we find him falling into the same disingenuous practices, and not hesitating to alter, suppress, or falsify, according as it suited his immediate purpose. Of all this he is proved to have been guilty in his Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland. "The total omission," says his opponent, "of some expressions that must have disproved the application of the passages, the careful discharge of all hostile words from the quotations, and the officious interpolation of friendly in their room, — facts that appear evident upon the face of the extracts above, certainly give an unhappy aspect of disingenuousness to the whole, and may seem to discredit the integrity and honour of Mr. Macpherson." — *Genuine History of the Britons asserted*, chap. i.

the two countries, as to make Scotland the sole source of all those materials for poetry which she had in reality derived through colonisation from Ireland.

The weight given to these compositions, as historical evidences, by the weak credulity with which they were at first received, has now long passed away. But it ought never, in recording the "follies of the wise," to be forgotten, that the critical Blair believed implicitly in the genuineness of these rhapsodies; and that by two grave historians, Henry and Whitaker, they have been actually referred to as authentic historical documents; the former having made use of their authority in illustrating the early poetry of the Britons, while the latter, in his account of the expedition of the emperor Severus into North Britain, makes up for the silence of all the ancient historians, as to its details, by some important particulars derived from the authentic page of the Bard of Selma; informing us that Fingal, who was at that time, as it seems, the Pendragon of Caledonia, negotiated a peace with the Romans *, upon the banks of the river Carron. With the same ludicrous seriousness, in relating the events of the naval expedition, under Niall Giallach, against the coasts of Britain, he describes the movements of the numerous navy of the ancient Irish, the boatmen singing to the chime of their oars, and the music of the harp, — the shield of the admiral hung upon the mast, "a sufficient mark of itself in the day, and frequently beat as a signal at night," — all upon the joint authority of the poets Claudian and Ossian!

In one point of view, the imposture has not been unserviceable to the cause of historical truth, inasmuch as, by directing public attention to the subject, it has led to a more correct and more generally diffused knowledge of the early relations between Scotland and Ireland, and rendered impossible, it is to be

* Hist. of Manchester, book i. chap. xii. sect. 2.

hoped, any recurrence of that confusion between the annals of the two countries,—that mist thrown purposely, in many instances, around their early connection, — in which alone such antiquarian pretensions and historical fictions as those of Fordun, Hector Boece, Dempster, and, lastly, Macpherson himself, could have hoped to escape detection. The spirit of enquiry, too, that was awakened by so long a course of controversy, has proved favourable no less to the literary than to the historical claims of ancient Ireland; as it was found that, in her songs and romances, which had been adopted by the Scots of Britain, as well as her heroes, lay the groundwork, however scanty, of this modern fabric of fiction; that, so far from her descendants, the Scots of Albany, having any pretensions to an original literature or distinct school of poesy, there had never existed, among the Highlanders, any books but Irish* ; and, while the scholars of Ireland could boast of manuscripts in their own tongue, near a thousand years old, it was not till so late as the year 1778 that even a Grammar of the Erse dialect of the Gaelic was in existence.

It has been already mentioned, that between the Irish and the first inhabitants of North Britain there had commenced an intercourse at a very early period. According to all accounts, the ancient Pictish colony that finally fixed themselves in Britain, had, on their way to that country, rested for a time in Ireland, and had been provided from thence, at their own request, with wives. The friendship founded upon this early connection was kept alive by continued intercourse between the two nations; and though the footing the Irish obtained in the third century upon the western coast of North Britain, produced a jealousy which sometimes disturbed, and even, at one period, endangered

* "It might boldly be averred that the Irish, who have written a host of grammars, did not derive their prosody from the Caledonians, who, till within these thirty years, had never possessed so much as the skeleton of a national grammar."—*Davies's Claims of Ossian.* Dr. Ferguson, too, in his communication to the Highland Society, admits that there were "no books in the Gaelic language, but the manuals of religion; and these in so awkward and clumsy a spelling that few could read them."

this small colony *, the advantage derived by both nations from such an alliance kept their fierce and feverish union unbroken. In addition to the pride which Ireland naturally felt in the task of watching over and nursing into vigour that germ of future dominion which she had planted in North Britain, her kings and princes, eternally at war with each other, as naturally looked beyond their own shores for allies; and accordingly, as in the instance of the monarch Tuathal, who owed his throne to the aid of Pictish arms, we find the alliance of that people frequently resorted to as a means of turning the scale of internal strife. On the other hand, the hardy highlanders of Caledonia, in the constant warfare they waged with their southern neighbours, were no less ready to resort to the assistance of a people fully as restless and pugnacious as themselves, and whose manners and habits, from a long course of connection, were, it is probable, but little different from their own.

As some defence against the incursions of these two hostile tribes, the Romans had, at different intervals during the second and third centuries, erected those three great walls or ramparts on the northern frontier of their province, whose remains still continue to occupy the curious research and speculation of the antiquary. But the hostility of these highlanders had, at the period of which we are now treating, assumed a still more audacious and formidable character; and,

* According to some writers, almost the whole of this Irish colony, reduced to extremity by the constant attacks of the Picts, were compelled, in the middle, it is said, of the fifth century, about fifty years before the establishment of the Scotic kingdom in North Britain, to abandon their possessions in Argyleshire, and take flight to Ireland, where they found a refuge in the hereditary territory of the Dalriadic princes. Neither in Tigernach, however, nor in the Annals of the Four Masters, does there occur any mention of such an event, which seems to depend wholly upon the authority of the Scotish writers, Major, Boece, Buchanan, &c., whose misrepresentation of most of the other facts connected with the event, renders them but suspicious testimonies on the subject of the Dalriadic settlement. Mr. O'Connor, however, has adopted the same unauthorised view. "The British Dalriada," he states, "was exercised by frequent hostilities from the Cruthneans, and, at one period, with so good success, that they forced almost the whole colony to take flight into Ireland, under their leader, Eochad Munrevar, who found a secure retreat for his followers in the Irish Dalriada."—*Dissert. on Hist. of Scotland.*

about the middle of the fourth century, so destructive had become their inroads, that it required the presence of the son of Constantine, to make head against and repel them. Whatever differences their relative position, as rival neighbours, had given rise to, were entirely merged in their common object of harassing the Britons, whom a native historian describes as trembling with the fear of a new visitation, while still fainting from the dire effects of the tempest which had just swept over them.

To deliver the province from this scourge, one of the bravest of the Roman generals, Theodosius, was now appointed to the military command of Britain; and after two active campaigns, during which he had to contend not only with the Picts and Scots by land, but also with their new allies, the Saxon pirates, by sea, he at length succeeded in delivering Britain from her inveterate invaders. To such daring lengths had some of these incursions into her territory extended, that, on the arrival of the Roman general, he had found the Picts and their allies advanced as far as London and Kent.* In all this warfare the Scots of Ireland were no less active than their brethren of Albany; and it is, therefore, remarkable that the Roman commander, though fitting out a fleet to chastise the Saxons in the Orcades, should yet have left Ireland, whose currachs wafted over such hostile swarms to his shores, still exempt from invasion. That his fleet chased, however, some of her vessels into their own northern harbours, may be concluded from a passage of the poem of Claudian, which commemorates this war: —

> "Nec falso nomine Pictos
> Edomuit, Scotumque vago mucrone secutus,
> Fregit Hyperboreas remis audacibus undas."

The few following lines from the same poem describe

* See Ammian. lib. 27. c. 8., who describes them as penetrating "ad Lundinium vetus oppidum, quod Augustam posteritas appellavit."

briefly and picturesquely the signal triumph over the three hostile nations which Theodosius had achieved:—

"Maduerunt Saxone fuso
Orcades, incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule,
Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne."

From this period there occurs nothing very remarkable in the course of Irish affairs till about the beginning of the fourth century, when the violent usurpation of the sovereign throne by Huas Colla, one of three brothers bearing the same name, produced a long series of tumultuous and sanguinary scenes. The battle, in which the rightful monarch, Fiach, lost his crown and his life to the usurper, is distinguished among the countless fields of carnage upon record, by the title of the Battle of Dubcomar; from the circumstance of the monarch's favourite Druid of that name having been among the number of the slain. This and other such known instances of Druidical warriors, show that justly as Macpherson has, in general, been accused of giving false pictures of Irish manners, his introduction of "Fighting Druids" is not to be reckoned among the number.* The name of Lamderg, or Bloody Hand, affixed by tradition, as we are told, to the Druid who has lived enchanted, it is thought, for ages, in one of the mountains of the county of Donegal, proves the sort of warlike reputation that was attached to some of this priesthood; and we learn from Cæsar, that even so solemn a question as the election of a High Priest used, among the Gaulish Druids, to be decided sometimes by an appeal to arms. A. D. 327.

After a reign of five years, the usurper Colla was compelled to abdicate the sovereignty by the rightful successor of the late monarch, Muredach Tiry, and the three Collas took flight, attended by 300 followers, to

* O'Reilly's Essay upon Ossian, where this objection is brought forward. "From the very name of Lamderg," says Toland, "we learn what sort of man the Druid was, who, by the vulgar, is thought to live enchanted in the mountain between Buniranach and Fathen, in the county of Donegal." He adds, that the Druids were many of them warriors.

North Britain.* From thence returning in the course of a year, they found means to conciliate, through the intervention of the Druids, the good-will of the monarch Muredach, and were also by his aid enabled to make war on the king of Ulster, and dispossess him of his dominions. It was in the course of the struggle consequent on this invasion, that the princely palace of Emania, whose construction formed one of the great epochs of Irish chronology, was, after a battle, upon which, we are told, six successive suns went down, destroyed by the victorious army, and not a trace of its long celebrated glories left behind.

A.D. 396-7. An invasion of Britain, on a far more extensive and formidable scale than had yet been attempted from Ireland, took place towards the close of the fourth century, under the auspices of Nial of the Nine Hostages, one of the most gallant of all the princes of the Milesian race. Observing that the Romans, after breaking up their lines of encampment along the coast opposite to Ireland, had retired to the eastern shore and the northern wall, Nial perceived that an apt opportunity was thus offered for a descent upon the now unprotected territory. Instantly summoning, therefore, all the forces of the island, and embarking them on board such ships as he could collect, he ranged with his numerous navy along the whole coast of Lancashire, effected a landing in Wales, from whence he carried off immense plunder, and, though compelled ultimately to retreat, left marks of depredation and ruin wherever he passed.† It was against the in-

* A poem is extant, written in the twelfth century, by Giolla na Naomh O'Dunn, giving "an account of the chief tribes descended from the three Collas, sons of Carbre Leffeachar, monarch of Ireland, who was killed at the battle of Gabhra, A. D. 296" — *Trans. of Ib. Celt. Society.* A manuscript copy of this poem is in the possession of Mr. O'Reilly, the secretary of the Iberno-Celtic Society.

† "In the days of Stilicho particularly, leaving the country between the Walls to be ravaged by their brethren of Argyle and the Picts, they (the Scots of Ireland) made a descent on the provinces that were inaccessible to them, landed in both of the divisions of Wales, and now, for the first time, possessed themselves of the Island of Man." — *Genuine Hist. of the Britons.*

cursions of this adventurous monarch, that some of those successes were achieved by the Romans, which threw such lustre around the military administration of Stilicho, and inspired the muse of Claudian in his praise. "By him," says the poet, speaking in the person of Britannia, "was I protected when the Scot moved all Ireland against me, and the ocean foamed with his hostile oars." * From another of this poet's eulogies, it appears that the fame of that Roman legion which had guarded the frontier of Britain against the invading Scots†, procured for it the distinction of being one of those summoned to the banner of Stilicho when the Goths threatened Rome.‡

Joined with the Picts and Scots, in these expeditions, were also another warlike Irish tribe, the Attacots; who, at an earlier period of their country's history, had distinguished themselves by their turbulent bravery; having been the chief movers of those two rebellions known by the name of the Attacottic Wars. The fierce valour of these wild warriors, who, after their settlement in North Britain, inhabited chiefly the districts close to Adrian's Wall, seems to have attracted the especial attention of the Romans, who, acting upon the policy, which proved so fatal to them in the decline of the

* Totam cum Scotus Iernen
Movit et infesto spumavit remige Tethys.
In I. Cons. Stilich. lib. i.

Thus well translated in the English Camden: —

When Scots came thundering from the Irish shores,
And th' ocean trembled, struck with hostile oars.

† The following remarks are not the less worthy of being cited for their having come from the pen of a writer who was either so ignorant or so prejudiced as to contend, that the Scots who fought by the side of the Picts against the Romans were not really Irish: —"There can be no greater proof of the Scots never having been conquered, than the very Roman walls themselves, built as fences against their hostilities; which, while there is a stone of them remaining, will be undeniable monuments of the valour and prowess of that nation."—*Gordon, Itinerarium Septentrionale*, chap. xiv.

‡ Venit et extremis Legio prætenta Britannis,
Quæ Scoto dat fræna truci, ferroque notatas
Perlegit exanimes Picto moriente figuras.
De Bello Getico.

empire, of incorporating with their own legions, and even with the Palatine troops, auxiliaries or deserters from the barbarian camps, succeeded in detaching some of these Attacotti from the Scoto-Pictish league, and enrolling them in the regular force of the empire. *

The tottering state of the Roman dominion in Gaul, as well as in every other quarter, at this period, encouraged the Hero of the Nine Hostages to extend his enterprises to the coast of Britany; where, after ravaging all the maritime districts of the north-west of Gaul, he was at length assassinated, with a poisoned arrow, by one of his own followers, near the Portus Iccius, not far, it is supposed, from the site of the present Boulogne. It was in the course of this predatory expedition that, in one of their descents on the coast of Armoric Gaul, the soldiers of Nial carried off with them, among other captives, a youth, then in his sixteenth year, whom Providence had destined to be the author of a great religious revolution in their country; and whom the strangely fated land to which he was then borne, a stranger and a slave, has now, for fourteen hundred years, commemorated as its great Christian apostle.

An accession of territory was, during this reign, added to the Irish possessions in North Britain; the two sons of Cork, king of Munster, having acquired seignories in the neighbourhood of the Picts, the one of Levinia, or Lenox; the other, of Moygergin, in Mar, a county of the present Scotland.

A.D. 406. To Nial the Great succeeded Dathy, the last of the Pagan monarchs of Ireland, and not unworthy to follow, as a soldier and adventurer, in the path opened to him by

* In the *Notitia Imperii*, the Attacotti are expressly named. "Procedente tempore cum bellicosos et formidandos Romani invenissent, præmiis propositis et sese auxiliariis adscriberent allexerunt, ideoque Attacottos in Notitia Imperii nominatos invenimus, curante Honorio, ut ex inimicis amici et vacillantis Imperii defensores haberentur."—*Rer. Hibern. Script.*, Prol. 1. lxxi.

"The Attacotti make a distinguished figure in the Notitia Imperii, where numerous bodies of them appear in the list of the Roman army. One body was in Illyricum, their ensign a kind of mullet; another at Rome, their badge a circle; the Attacotti Honoriani were in Italy."—*Pinkerton, Enquiry*, part iv. chap. 2.

his heroic predecessor. Not only, like Nial, did he venture to invade the coasts of Gaul; but, allured by the prospect of plunder, which the state of the province, then falling fast into dismemberment, held forth, forced his way to the foot of the Alps, and was there killed, it is said, by a flash of lightning, leaving the throne of Ireland to be filled thenceforward by a line of Christian kings.

CHAP. VIII.

CREDIBILITY OF THE HISTORY OF PAGAN IRELAND.

Before entering upon the new epoch of Irish history, which is about to open upon us with the introduction of Christianity, a review of the general features of the period over which we have passed may be found not uninteresting or unuseful. With regard to the first and most material question, the authenticity of those records on which the foregoing brief sketch of Pagan Ireland is founded, it is essential, in the first place, to distinguish clearly between what are called the Bardic Historians, — certain metrical writers, who flourished from the ninth to the eleventh century, — and those regular chroniclers or annalists of whom a long series was continued down, there is every reason to believe, from very early ages, and whose successive records have been embodied and transmitted to us in the Annals of Tigernach *, in

* In the Annals of the Four Masters for the year 1088, the death of this annalist is thus recorded:—"Tigernach O'Braoin, Comorban, or Successor of Kieran of Clonmacnois and of St. Coman (*i. e.* Abbot of Clonmacnois and Roscommon), a learned lecturer and historian."

those of the Four Masters *, of Inisfallen, of Ulster †, and many others.‡

To the metrical historians above mentioned is to be attributed the credit, if not of originally inventing, at least of amplifying and embellishing, that tale of the Milesian colonisation which so many grave and respectable writers have, since their time, adopted. In his zeal for the credit of this national legend, the late learned librarian of Stowe has endeavoured to enlist some of the more early Irish poets in its support. § On his own showing, however, it is manifest that in no Irish writings before those of Maolmura ||, who died towards the close of the ninth century, are any traces whatever of the Milesian fable to be found.

There appears little doubt, indeed, that to some metrical writers of the ninth century the first rudiments of this wild romance respecting the origin of the Irish people are to be assigned; that succeeding writers took care to

* Compiled in the seventeenth century, by Michael O'Clery, with the assistance of three other antiquaries, and "chiefly drawn," says Harris, "from the annals of Clonmacnois, Inisfall, and Senat, as well as from other approved and ancient chronicles of Ireland." For a fuller account of the various sources from whence these records were derived, see Mr. Petrie's Remarks on the History and Authenticity of the Autograph Original of the Annals of the Four Masters, now deposited in the library of the R. I. A. Academy.

† Published, for the first time, by Dr. O'Connor, from a Bodleian manuscript of the year 1215.

‡ A long list of these various books of Annals may be found in Nicholson's Historical Library, chap. 2.; also in the preface to Keating's History, xxi.

§ For the very slight grounds, or, rather, mere pretence of grounds, upon which Dr. O'Connor lays claim to Fiech and Confealad, Irish poets of the sixth and seventh centuries, as authorities for the Milesian story, see, among other passages, Ep. Nunc. xxxiv., Prol. 2. xv. xxvi Having once claimed them, thus gratuitously, as favouring his views of the subject, he continues constantly after to refer to them, as concurrent authorities with those later bardic historians, in whom alone the true origin and substance of the whole story is to be found.

The Psalter-na-Rann attributed to the Culdee, Ængus, which is another of the writings appealed to by Dr O'Connor, on this point, was, however, not the work of that pious author (who wrote solely on religious subjects), nor of a date earlier, as is evident, than the tenth century. See Lanigan, Ecclesiast. Hist., chap. xx. note 107.

|| This writer, who died in the year 884, was the author of a poem beginning, "Let us sing the origin of the Gadelians:" in which, deriving the origin of the Milesians from Japhet, son of Noah, he gives an account of the peregrinations of the ancestors of the Irish from the dispersion at Babel to the arrival in Ireland. Contemporary with Maolmura was Flann Mac Lonan, of whose compositions there remain, says Mr. O'Reilly, three poems, which "are to be found in the account of the spreading branches of Heber, son of Milesius, in the Leabhar Muimhneach, or Munster Book."

amplify and embellish the original sketch ; and that in the hands of the author or authors of the Psalter of Cashel*, it assumed that full-blown form of fiction and extravagance in which it has ever since flourished. It is worthy of remark, too, that the same British writer, Nennius, who furnished Geoffry of Monmouth with his now exploded fables of the descent of the Britons from king Brute and the Trojans, was the first also who put forth the tale of the Scythian ancestors of the Irish, and of their coming, in the fourth age of the world, by the way of Africa and Spain, into Hibernia. Having conversed, as he himself tells us, with the most learned among the Scots †, and been by them, it is evident, informed of their early traditions respecting a colony from Spain, he was tempted to eke out their genealogy for them by extending it as far as Scythia and the Red Sea, just as he had provided the Britons with Trojan progenitors, under the command of king Brute, from Greece.

To our metrical historians may be assigned also the credit of inventing that specious system of chronology upon which the fabric of their fabled antiquity entirely rests, and which, though well calculated to effect the object of its inventors, — that of carrying back to remote times the date of the Milesian dynasty, — proves them not to have been over-scrupulous in the means they used for that purpose.‡ It is, indeed, as I have already, more

* From this work, which was compiled, about the beginning of the tenth century, by Cormac Mac Culinan, bishop of Cashel and king of Munster, Keating professes to have drawn a great part of his History of Ireland. "Since most," says Keating, "of the authentic records of Ireland are composed in *dann*, or verse, I shall receive them as the principal testimonies to follow in compiling the following history ; for, notwithstanding that some of the chronicles of Ireland differ from these poetical records in some cases, yet the testimony of the annals that were written in verse is not for that reason invalid."— *Preface*. About the middle of the tenth century flourished Eochaidh O'Floinn, whose poems, relating to the marvels of the first Irish colonies, the battles between the Nemethians and the sea rovers, the destruction of Conan's Tower, are still preserved in the Books of Glendalough, Ballymote, and Leacan, the Dinn Seanchas, Book of Invasions, &c.

† "Sic mihi peritissimi Scottorum nuntiaverunt." Nennius wrote about the year 858.

‡ The extravagant chronology of the metrical catalogues of kings given by Gilla-Coeman, and other later bards, is fully acknowledged by Dr. O'Connor himself:—"Hæc plane indicant nostras, de Scotorum origine, et primo in Hiberniam ac inde in Britanniam adventu, traditiones metricas

than once, remarked, far less in the events themselves, than in the remote date assigned to those events, that much of the delusion attributed in general to Irish history lies. The ambition of a name ancient as the world, and the lax, accommodating chronology, which is found ever ready, in the infancy of science, to support such pretensions, has led the Irish, as it has led most other nations, to antedate their own existence and fame.*

Together with the primitive mode of numbering ages and ascertaining the dates of public events, by the successions of kings and the generations of men, the ancient Irish possessed also a measure of time in their two great annual festivals of Baal and of Samhin, the recurrence of which at certain fixed periods furnished points, in each year, from whence to calculate. How far even History may advance to perfection where no more regular chronology exists, appears in the instance of Thucydides, who was able to enrich the world with his "treasure for all time" before any era from whence to date had yet been established in Greece. It was, however, in this very mode of computing by regal successions that the great source of the false chronology of the Irish antiquaries lay. From the earliest times, the government of that country consisted of a cluster of kingdoms, where, besides the Monarch of the whole island and the four provincial Kings, there was also a

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historica esse fide suffultas; sed dum bardi prodigiosam antiquitatem majoribus adscribere conarentur, id tantum fingendi licentia efficere ut quas illustrare debuerant veritates offuscarent, et dum Hiberniam fabulis nobilitare cupiunt, ipsi sibi fidem ita derogant ut postea, cum ad tempora historica descendunt, etsi vera dixerint, nimia severitate redarguantur." —*Prol.* 2. xlvi.

It was by Coeman, notwithstanding, that the author of Ogygia chiefly regulated his chronology; and the erudite efforts which he makes to reconcile his system to common sense show how laboriously, sometimes, the learned can go astray. "It is no wonder," says Mr. O'Connor of Balenagare, "that Gilla-Coeman, and many other of our old antiquaries, have fallen into mistakes and anachronisms: to their earliest reports Mr. O'Flaherty gave too much credit, and to their later accounts Sir James Ware gave too little."—*Reflections on the Hist. of Ireland, Collectan.* No. 10.

* "The Danes," saith Dudo S. Quintin, "derived themselves from the Danai; the Prussians from Prusias, king of Bithynia, who brought the Greeks along with them. Only the Scots and Irish had the wit to derive themselves from the Greeks and Egyptians together."—*Antiq. of British Churches.*

number of inferior sovereigns, or Dynasts, who each affected the regal name and power. Such a state of things it was that both tempted and enabled the genealogists to construct that fabric of fictitious antiquity by which they imposed not only on others, but on themselves. Having such an abundance of royal blood thus placed at their disposal, the means afforded to them of filling up the genealogical lines, and thereby extending back the antiquity of the monarchy, were far too tempting to be easily resisted. Accordingly, — as some of those most sanguine in the cause of our antiquities have admitted, — not only were kings who had been contemporaries made to succeed each other, but even princes, acknowledged only by their respective factions, were promoted to the rank of legitimate monarchs, and took their places in the same regular succession.* By no other expedient, indeed, could so marvellous a list of Royalty have been fabricated, as that which bestows upon Ireland, before the time of St. Patrick, no less than a hundred and thirty-six monarchs of Milesian blood; thereby extending the date of the Milesian or Scotic settlement to so remote a period as more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

Between the metrical historians, or rather romancers, of the middle ages, and those regular annalists who, at the same and a later period, but added their own stock of contemporary records to that consecutive series of annals which had been delivered down, in all probability, for many ages, — between these two sources of evidence, a wide distinction, as I have already inculcated, is to be drawn.† It is true that, in some of the

* A nearly similar mode of lengthening out their regal lists was practised among the Egyptians. "Their kings," says Bryant, "had many names and titles; these titles have been branched out into persons, and inserted in the lists of real monarchs; . . . . by which means the chronology of Egypt has been greatly embarrassed."

† Till of late years they have been, by most writers, both English and Irish, confounded. Thus the sensible author of "An Analysis of the Antiquities of Ireland," who, though taking a just and candid view of his subject, had no means of access to the documents which alone could strengthen and illustrate it, has, in the following passage, mixed up together, as of equal importance, our most fabulous compilations and most authentic annals: — "Let us have faithful copies, with just versions, of

collections of Annals that have come down to us, the fabulous wonders of the first four ages of the world, from Cæsara down to the landing of the sons of Milesius, have been, in all their absurdity, preserved, — as they are, indeed, in most histories of the country down to the present day. It is likewise true, that by most of the annalists the same deceptive scheme of chronology has been adopted, by which the lists of the kings preceding the Christian era are lengthened out so preposterously into past time. But admitting to the full all such deductions from the authority of these records, more especially as regards their chronology for the times preceding our era, still their pretensions, on the whole, to rank as fair historical evidence, can hardly, on any just grounds, be questioned.

From the objections that have just been alleged against most of the other Books of Annals, that of Tigernach is almost wholly free; as, so far from placing in the van of history the popular fictions of his day, this chronicler has passed them over significantly in silence; and beginning his Annals with a comparatively late monarch, Kimboath, pronounces the records of the Scots, previously to that period, to have been all uncertain.* The feeling of confidence which so honest a commencement inspires, is fully justified by the tone of veracity which pervades the whole of his statements; and, according as he approaches the Christian era, and, still more, as he advances into that period, the remarkable consistency of his chronology, his know-

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the hidden records of Keating, of the Psalter of Cashel, of the Book of Lecan, of the Annals of Inisfallen, of those of the Four Masters, and of every other work which may be judged to be of importance. The requisition is simple as it is reasonable. They have long amused us with declamations on the inestimable value of these literary treasures; and surely, after having excited our curiosity, their conduct will be inexcusable, if they do not in the end provide for its gratification."

* Doctor O'Connor, it is right to mention, is of opinion that Tigernach had, like all the other annalists, begun his records from the creation of the world, and that the commencement of his manuscript has been lost. But, besides that the view taken by the annalist as to the uncertainty of all earlier monuments, sufficiently accounts for his not ascending any higher, all the different manuscripts, it appears, of his Annals agree in not carrying the records farther back than A. C. 305.

ledge and accuracy in synchronising Irish events with those of the Roman history, and the uniformly dry matter of fact which forms the staple of his details, all bespeak for these records a confidence of no ordinary kind; and render them, corroborated as they are by other Annals of the same grave description, a body of evidence, even as to the earlier parts of Irish history, far more trustworthy and chronological than can be adduced for some of the most accredited transactions of that early period of Grecian story, when, as we know, the accounts of great events were kept by memory alone.*

A learned writer, who, by the force of evidence, has been constrained to admit the antiquity of the lists of Irish kings, has yet the inconsistency to deny to this people the use of letters before the coming of St. Patrick. It is to be recollected that the regal lists which he thus supposes to have been but orally transmitted, and which, from the commencement of the Christian era, are shown to have been correctly kept, consist of a long succession of princes, in genealogical order, with, moreover, the descent even of the collateral branches in all their different ramifications.† Such is the nature of the royal lists

* "It is strongly implied by his (Pausanias's) expressions, that the written register of the Olympian victors was not so old as Chorœbus, but that the account of the first Olympiads had been kept by memory alone. Indeed, it appears certain from all memorials of the best authority, that writing was not common in Greece so early."—*Mitford*, vol. i. chap. 3.

"When we consider that this was the first attempt (the Olympionics of Timæus of Sicily) that we know of, to establish an era, and that it was in the 129th Olympiad, what are we to think of the preceding Greek chronology?"—*Wood's Enquiry into the Life, &c. of Homer.*

† "In Ireland, the genealogies which are preserved, could not have been handed down in such an extensive, and at the same time so correct a manner, without this acquaintance with letters, as the tables embrace too great a compass to retain them in the memory; and as, without the assistance of these elements of knowledge, there would have been no sufficient inducement to bestow on them such peculiar attention."—*Webb, Analysis of the Antiq. of Ireland.* Another well-informed writer thus enforces the same view:—"The Irish genealogical tables, which are still extant, carry intrinsic proofs of their being genuine and authentic, by their chronological accuracy and consistency with each other through all the lines collateral, as well as direct; a consistency not to be accounted for on the supposition of their being fabricated in a subsequent age of darkness and ignorance, but easily explained if we admit them to have been drawn from the real source of family records and truth."—*Enquiry concerning the Original of the Scots in Britain, by Barnard, Bishop of Killaloe.*

"Foreigners may imagine that it is granting too much to the Irish to allow them lists of kings more ancient than those of any other country in modern Europe; but the singularly compact and remote situation of that

which, according to this sapient supposition, must have been transmitted correctly, from memory to memory, through a lapse of many centuries; and such the weakness of that sort of scepticism, — not unmixed sometimes with a lurking spirit of unfairness, — which, while straining at imaginary difficulties on one side of a question, is prepared to swallow the most indigestible absurdities on the other. And here, a consideration on the general subject of Irish antiquities presents itself, which, as it has had great weight in determining my own views of the matter, may, perhaps, not be without some influence on the mind of my reader. In the course of this chapter shall be laid before him a view of the state in which Ireland was found in the fifth century, — of the condition of her people, their forms of polity, institutions, and usages at that period when the Christian faith first visited her shores; and when, by the light which then broke in upon her long seclusion, she became, for the first time, in any degree known to the other nations of Europe. In that very state, political and social, in which her people were then found, with the very same laws, forms of government, manners and habits, did they remain, without change or innovation, for the space of seven hundred years; and though, at the end of that long period, brought abjectly under a foreign yoke, yet continued unsubdued in their attachment to the old law of their country, nor would allow it to be superseded by the code of the conqueror for nearly five hundred years after.

It is evident that to infuse into any order of things so pervading a principle of stability, must have been the slow work of time alone; nor could any system of laws and usages have taken so strong a hold of the hearts of a whole people as those of the Irish had evidently obtained at the time of the coming of St. Patrick, without

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island, and its freedom from Roman conquest, and from the concussions of the fall of the Roman empire, may infer this allowance not too much. But all contended for is the list of kings so easily preserved by the repetition of bards at high solemnities, and some grand events of history." — *Pinkerton, Enquiry into the Hist. of Scotland*, part iv. chap. i.

the lapse of many a foregone century to enable them to strike so deeply their roots. In no country, as we shall see, was Christianity received with so fervid a welcome; but in none also had she to make such concessions to old established superstitions, or to leave so much of those religious forms and prejudices, which she found already subsisting, unaltered. Nor was it only over the original Irish themselves that these prescriptive laws had thus by long tenure gained an ascendancy; as even those foreign tribes, — for the most part, as we have seen, Teutonic, — who obtained a settlement among them, had been forced, though conquerors, to follow in the current of long established customs*; till, as was said of the conquering colonists of an after day, they grew, at length, to be more Hibernian than the Hibernians themselves. The same ancient forms of religion and of government were still preserved; the language of the multitude soon swept away that of the mere caste who ruled them, and their entire exemption from Roman dominion left them safe from even a chance of change.†

How far the stern grasp of Roman authority might have succeeded in effacing from the minds of the Irish their old habits and predilections, it is needless now to enquire. But had we no other proof of the venerable antiquity of their nation, this fond fidelity to the past, this retrospective spirit, which is sure to be nourished in the minds of a people by long-hallowed institutions, would, in the absence of all other means of proof, be fully sufficient for the purpose. When, in addition to this

* The consequences of this "Oriental inflexibility," — as Niebhur expresses it, in speaking of the Syrians, — are thus described by Camden: — "The Irish are so wedded to their own customs, that they not only retain them themselves, but corrupt the English that come among them."

† It has been falsely asserted by some writers, that the Romans visited, and even conquered, Ireland. The old chronicler Wyntown, carries them to that country even so early as the first century; and Gueudeville, the wretched compiler of the Atlas Historique, has, in his map of Ireland, represented the country as reduced within the circle of the Roman sway. The pretended monk Richard, also, who, thanks to the credulity of historians, was permitted to establish a new Roman province, Vespasiana, to the north of Antonine's Wall, has, in like manner, made a present to Constantine the Great of the tributary submission of Ireland. "A. M. 4307, Constantinus, qui Magnus postea dicitur . . . cui se sponte tributarium offert Hibernia."

evidence impressed upon the very character of her people, we find Ireland furnished also with all that marks an ancient nation,—unnumbered monuments of other days and belonging to unknown creeds,—a language the oldest of all European tongues still spoken by her people, and Annals written in that language of earlier date than those of any other northern nation of Europe*, tracing the line of her ancient kings, in chronological order, up as far at least as the commencement of the Christian era,—when we find such a combination of circumstances, all bearing in the same direction, all confirming the impression derived from the historical character of the people,—it is surely an abuse of the right of doubting, to reject lightly such an amount of evidence, or resist the obvious conclusion to which it all naturally leads.

Among the most solemn of the customs observed in Ireland, during the times of paganism, was that of keeping, in each of the provinces, as well as at the seat of the monarchical government, a public Psalter, or register, in which all passing transactions of any interest were noted down. This, like all their other ancient observances, continued to be retained after the introduction of Christianity; and to the great monasteries, all over the country, fell the task of watching over and continuing these records.† That, in their zeal for religion, they should have destroyed most of those documents which referred to the dark rites and superstitions of heathenism, appears highly credible.‡ But such records as related chiefly to past political events were not obnoxious to the same hostile feeling; and these the monks not only, in most instances, preserved, but carried on a continuation of them, from age to age, in

* "Cæterarum enim gentium Septentrionalium antiquitates scriptas longe recentiores esse existimo, si cum Hibernicis comparentur."—*Dr. O'Connor, Ep. Nunc.* xix.

† "Alibi indicavi celebriora Hiberniæ monasteria amanuensem aluisse, *Scribhinn* appellatum."—*Rer. Hib. Script. Ep. Nunc.*

‡ "Of the works of the Druids, as we are informed from the Lecan Records, by the learned Donald Mac Firbiss, no fewer than 180 tracts were committed to the flames at the instance of St. Patrick. Such an example set the converted Christians to work in all parts, till, in the end, all the remains of the Druidic superstition were utterly destroyed"—*Dissert. on the Hist. of Ireland.*

much the same tone of veracious dryness as characterises that similar series of records, the Saxon Chronicle. In like manner, too, as the English annalists are known, in most instances, to have founded their narrations upon the Anglo-Saxon documents derived from their ancestors, so each succeeding Irish chronicler transmitted the records which he found existing, along with his own; thus giving to the whole series, as has been well said of the Saxon Chronicle, the force of contemporary evidence. *

The precision with which the Irish annalists have recorded, to the month, day, and hour, an eclipse of the sun, which took place in the year 664, affords both an instance of the exceeding accuracy with which they observed and noted passing events, and also an undeniable proof that the annals for that year, though long since lost, must have been in the hands of those who have transmitted to us that remarkable record. In calculating the period of the same eclipse, the Venerable Bede †, — led astray, it is plain, by his ignorance of that yet undetected error of the Dionysian cycle, by which the equation of the motions of the sun and moon was affected, — exceeded the true time of the event by several days. Whereas the Irish chronicler, wholly ignorant of the rules of astronomy, and merely recording what he had seen passing before his eyes, — namely, that the eclipse occurred, about the tenth hour, on the 3d of May, in the year 664, — has transmitted a date to posterity, of which succeeding astronomers have acknowledged the accuracy.

It may be said, that this observation was supplied and interpolated by some later hand; but this would only rescue us from one difficulty to involve us as deeply in

* "The annals of these writers are, perhaps, but Latin translations of Anglo-Saxon Chronicles . . . . at least, the existence of similar passages, yet in Anglo-Saxon, is one of the best proofs we can obtain of this curious fact, that the Latin narrations of all our chroniclers, of the events preceding the Conquest, are in general translations or abridgments from the Anglo-Saxon documents of our ancestors. This fact is curious, because, wherever it obtains, it gives to the whole series of our annals the force of contemporary evidence."—*Turner, Hist of Anglo-Saxons*, book vi. chap. 7.

† Hist. Ecclesiast. lib iii cap 27.

another; as it must, in that case, be admitted that among the Irish of the middle ages were to be found astronomers sufficiently learned to be able to anticipate that advanced state of knowledge which led to the correction of the Dionysian period, and to ascertain, to the precise hour, a long-past eclipse, which the learned Bede, as we have seen, was unable to calculate to the day. But how far, at a distance of nearly two centuries from the time of this eclipse, were even the best Irish scholars from being capable of any such calculations may be judged from a letter, still extant, on this very subject of eclipses, which was addressed to Charlemagne by an Irish doctor of the ninth century, named Dungal.* The letter is in reply to a question proposed by the emperor to the most eminent scholars of that day in Europe, respecting the appearance, as had been alleged, of two solar eclipses, in the course of the year 810; and the Irish doctor, though so far right as to express his doubts that these two eclipses had been visible, is unable, it is plain, to assign any scientific reason for his opinion. Down to a much later period, indeed, so little had the Irish scholars advanced in this science, that, as it appears from the second part of the Annals of Inisfallen, they had one year† experienced much difficulty and controversy before they could succeed even in fixing Easter Day.

It may be, therefore, taken for granted, that it was not from any scientific calculation of after times, but from actual and personal observation at the moment, that this accurate date of the occurrence of the eclipse in 664 was derived.‡ With equal clearness does it

* Epist. Dungali Reclusi ad Carol. Magnum de duplici Solis Eclipsi, Ann. 810. This letter may be found in D'Achéry's Spicilegium, tom. iii., together with some critical remarks upon it by Ismael Bullialdus, the learned champion of the Philolaic system, whom D'Achéry had consulted on the subject.

† Rer. Hibern. Script. Prol. 2. cxxxvi. Dr. O'Connor refers, for the above record, to the year 1444; but this is evidently a typographical error, such as abound, I regret to say, throughout this splendid work, — the continuation of the Annals of Inisfallen having come down no further than year 1320.

‡ Annals of Tigernach. For the substance of the argument, founded upon this record, I am indebted to Dr. O'Connor, Prol. 2. cxxxiv.

follow that some written record of the observation must have reached those annalists, who, themselves ignorant of the mode of calculating such an event, have transmitted it accurately to our days as they received it. There are still earlier eclipses, — one as far back as A. D. 496, — the years of whose appearance we find noted down by the chroniclers with equal correctness: and so great was the regularity with which, through every succeeding age, all such changes in the ordinary aspect of the heavens was observed and registered, that, by means of these records, the chronologist is enabled to trace the succession, not only of the monarchs of Ireland, but of the inferior kings, bishops, and abbots, from the first introduction of Christianity, down to the occupation of the country by the English.

Having, therefore, in the accurate date of the eclipse of 664, and in its correct transmission to succeeding times, so strong an evidence of the existence of a written record at that period; and knowing, moreover, that of similar phenomena in the two preceding centuries, the memory has also been transmitted down to after ages, it is not surely assuming too much to take for granted that the transmission was effected in a similar manner; and that the medium of written record, through which succeeding annalists were made acquainted with the day and hour of the solar eclipse of 664*, conveyed to them also the following simple memorandum which occurs in their chronicles for the year 496. — "Death of Mac-Cuilin, bishop of Lusk. — An eclipse of the sun. — The pope Gelasius died."

It thus appears pretty certain, that, as far back as the century in which Christianity became the established faith of Ireland, the practice of chronicling public events may be traced; and I have already shown, that the

* The dates assigned to the several eclipses are, in this and other instances, confirmed by their accordance with the catalogues of eclipses composed by modern astronomers, with those in the learned work of the Benedictines, and other such competent authorities. There is even an eclipse, it appears, noticed in the Annals of Ulster, ad ann. 674, which has been omitted in *L'Art de vérifier les Dates* — Ep. Nunc. xciv.

same consecutive chain of records carries the links back, with every appearance of historical truth, to at least the commencement of the Christian era, if not to a century or two beyond that period. To attempt to fix, indeed, the precise time when the confines of history begin to be confused with those of fable, is a task in Irish antiquities, as in all others, of mere speculation and conjecture.* It has been seen that Tigernach, by far the best informed and most judicious of our annalists, places the dawn of certainty in Irish history at so early a period as the reign of Kimbaoth, about 300 years before the birth of Christ: and it is certain that the building of the celebrated Palace of Emania, during that monarch's reign, by establishing an era, or fixed point of time, from whence chronology might begin to calculate, gives to the dates and accounts of the succeeding reigns an appearance of accuracy not a little imposing. This apparent exactness, however, in the successions previous to the Christian era, will not stand the test of near enquiry. For the purpose of making out a long line of kings before that period, a deceptive scheme of chronology has been adopted; and all the efforts made by O'Flaherty and others to connect the traditions of those times into a series of regular history, but serve to prove how hopeless, or, at least, wholly uncertain, is the task.

As we descend towards the first age of Christianity

* According to Mr. O'Connor of Balenacgare, in his later and more moderate stage of antiquarianism, "it is from the succession of Feredach the Just, and the great revolution soon after, under Tuathal the Acceptable, that we can date exactness in our Heathen History."— *Reflections on the Hist. of Ireland.* The period here assigned commences about A. D. 85. A Right Reverend writer, however, in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, carries his faith in Irish chronology much further. "A general agreement," says Bishop Barnard, "appears in the names and lineage of that long series of princes that succeeded and descended from the first conqueror down to the fifth century; and the descent of the collateral branches is traced up to the royal stem with such precision and consistency, as shows it to have been once a matter of public concern. The later bards and seanachies could not have fabricated tables that should have stood the test of critical examination as these will do; from whence I infer, that they have been a true transcript from ancient records then extant, but since destroyed. I am ready to admit, however, that the transactions of those times is mixed with the fictions of later ages . . . . it is, therefore, neither to be received nor rejected in the gross, but to be read with a sceptical caution." — *Enquiry concerning the Original, &c. by Barnard, Bishop of Killaloe.*

events stand out from the ground of tradition more prominently, and begin to take upon them more of the substance of historical truth. The restoration, under Eochy Feyloch, of the ancient Pentarchy which had been abolished by the monarch Hugony, — the important advance made in civilisation during the reign of Conquovar Mac Nessa, by committing the laws of the country to writing, — these and other signal events, almost coeval with the commencement of Christianity, border so closely upon that period to which, it has been shown, written records most probably extended, as to be themselves all but historical.

In corroboration of the view here taken of the authenticity of the Irish Annals, and of the degree of value and confidence which is due to them, I need but refer to an authority which, on such subjects, ranks among the highest. "The Chronicles of Ireland," says sir James Mackintosh, "written in the Irish language, from the second century to the landing of Henry Plantagenet, have been recently published, with the fullest evidence of their genuineness and exactness. The Irish nation, though they are robbed of many of their legends by this authentic publication, are yet by it enabled to boast that they possess genuine history several centuries more ancient than any other European nation possesses, in its present spoken language; — they have exchanged their legendary antiquity for historical fame. Indeed, no other nation possesses any monument of its literature, in its present spoken language, which goes back within several centuries of the beginning of these chronicles."*

With the exception of the mistake into which sir James Mackintosh has here, rather unaccountably, been led, in supposing that, among the written Irish chronicles which have come down to us, there are any so early as

* Hist. of England, vol. i. chap. 2. A writer in the Edin. Rev. No. xcii., in speaking of Dr. O'Connor's work, thus, in a similar manner, expresses himself: — "We have here the works of the ancient Irish historians, divested of modern fable and romance; and whatever opinion may be formed of the early traditions they record, satisfactory evidence is afforded that many facts they relate, long anterior to our earliest chroniclers, rest on contemporary authority . . . . Some of Dr. O'Connor's readers may hesitate to admit the degree of culture and prosperity he claims for his

the second century, the tribute paid by him to the authenticity and historical importance of these documents* appears to me, in the highest degree, deserved; and comes with the more authority, from a writer whose command over the wide domain of history enabled him fully to appreciate the value of any genuine addition to it.

It has been thus clearly, as I conceive, demonstrated that our Irish Annals are no forgery of modern times; no invention, as has been so often alleged, by modern monks and versifiers: but, for the most part, a series of old authentic records, of which the transcripts have from age to age been delivered down to our own times. Though confounded ordinarily with the fabulous tales of the Irish Bards, these narrations bear on the face of them a character the very reverse of poetical, and such as, in itself alone, is a sufficient guarantee of their truth. It has been shown, moreover, that the lists preserved of the ancient Irish kings (more ancient than those of any other country in modern Europe) are regulated by a system of chronology which, however in many respects imperfect, computes its dates in the ancient mode, by generations and successions; and was founded upon the same measures of time—the lunar year, and the regular recurrence of certain periodical festivals—by which the Greeks, the Romans, and other great nations of antiquity, all computed the earlier stages of their respective careers.

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countrymen; but no one, we think, can deny, after perusing his proofs, that the Irish were a lettered people, while the Saxons were still immersed in darkness and ignorance." I shall add one other tribute to the merit of Dr. O'Connor's work, coming from a source which highly enhances the value of the praise:—"A work (says sir F. Palgrave) which, whether we consider the learning of the editor, the value of the materials, or the princely munificence of the Duke of Buckingham, at whose expense it was produced, is without a parallel in modern literature."—*Rise of the English Commonwealth.*

* How little, till lately, these Annals were known, even to some who have written most confidently respecting Ireland, may be seen by reference to a letter addressed by Mr. O'Connor to General Vallancey, acknowledging his perusal then, for the first time, of the Annals of Tigernach and of Inisfallen, which his venerable friend had lately lent him.—*Reflect. on Hist. of Ireland, Collect.* No. 10. The ignorance of Mr. Beauford, too, a professed Irish antiquary, respecting the valuable work of Tigernach, is shown by the statement in his Druidism Revived (Collectan. Hib. No. vii.), that the records of this annalist commence only at the fifth century, "without making the least mention of the pagan state of the Irish."

CHAP. IX.

REVIEW OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND STATE OF CIVILISATION OF THE PAGAN IRISH.

HAVING thus pointed out how far reliance may safely be placed on that brief abstract of the earlier portion of Irish history, which has been given in a preceding chapter, it may be worth while to pause and contemplate the picture which this period of our annals presents; a picture the more worthy of attention, as, from that persevering adherence to old customs, habits, and, by natural consequence, dispositions, which has ever distinguished the course of the Irish people, the same peculiarities of character that mark any one part of their country's history will be found to pervade every other; insomuch, that, allowing only for that degree of advancement in the arts and luxuries of life, which in the course of time could not but take place, it may be asserted, that such as the Irish were in the early ages of their pentarchy, such, in most respects, they have remained to the present day.

We have seen that, from the earliest times of which her traditions preserve the memory, Ireland was divided into a certain number of small principalities, each governed by its own petty king, or dynast, and the whole subordinate to a supreme monarch, who had nominally, but seldom really, a control over their proceedings. This form of polity, which continued to be maintained, without any essential innovation upon its principle, down to the conquest of the country by Henry II., was by no means peculiar to Ireland, but was the system common to the whole Celtic, if not also Teutonic race *, and, like all the other primitive in-

* During the Heptarchy, the island of Great Britain contained about fifteen kingdoms, Saxon, British, and Scotch; and in one of the smallest of them, the kingdom of Kent, there were at one time three chiefs, on whom the Annalists bestow the title of King. See Edin. Review, No. lxx. art. 12.

stitutions of Europe, had its origin in the East. Without going so far back as the land of Canaan, in the time of Joshua, where every city could boast its own king, we find that the small and narrow territory of the Phœnicians was, in a similar manner, parcelled out into kingdoms; and from Homer's account of the separate dominions of the Grecian chiefs, it would seem that they also were constructed upon the same Canaanite pattern. The feeling of clanship, indeed, out of which this sort of government by a chieftainry sprung, appears to have prevailed strongly in Greece, and to have been one of the great cements of all their confederations, warlike or political.*

In none of these countries, however, does the title and power of Royalty appear to have been partitioned out into such minute divisions and subdivisions as in the provincial government of Ireland, where, in addition to the chief king of each province, every subordinate prince, or head of a large district, assumed also the title of king, and exercised effectually within his own dominions all the powers of sovereignty,—even to the prerogative of making war, not only with his co-equal princes, but with the king of the whole province, whenever he could muster up a party sufficiently strong for such an enterprize.

To the right of primogeniture, so generally acknowledged in those ages, no deference whatever was paid by the Irish. Within the circle of the near kin of the reigning prince, all were alike eligible to succeed him; so that the succession may be said to have been hereditary as to the blood, but elective as to the person.† Not only the monarch himself was created thus by election,

* The opinion that the feudal system originated in the East, is not without some strong evidence in its favour. In Diodorus Siculus (lib. 1.) we find the tenure by military service pretty accurately described, and said to be a custom of the Egyptians, as well as of some Greek cities derived from them. Δευτεραν δε ταξιν γενεσθαι την των γεωμορων, των οφιλοντων ὁπλα κεκτησθαι και πολεμειν ὑπερ της πολεως, ὁμοιως τοις κατ' Αιγυπτον νομιζομενοις γεωργοις και τους μαχιμους παρεχομενοις.

See Richardson (Dissert. on the Languages, &c. of Eastern Nations), who asserts that feudality "flourished in the East, with much vigour, in very early times."

† Campbell's Strictures, &c. sect. v.

but a successor, or Tanist*, was, during his lifetime, assigned to him by the same process; and as if the position alone of heir-apparent did not render him sufficiently formidable to the throne, the law, in the earlier ages, also, it is said, conferred upon him the right of being chief general of the army, and chief judge of the whole state or kingdom. For the succession to the minor thrones a similar provision was made: to every petty king a successor was, in like manner, appointed, with powers proportioned to those of his chief; and thus, in addition to the constant dissension of all these princes among themselves†, each saw by his side an adult and powerful rival, chosen generally without any reference to his own choice or will; and, as mostly happens, even where the successor is so by hereditary right, forming an authorised rallying-point for the ambitious and disaffected.

So many contrivances, as they would seem, for discord, could not but prove successful. All the defects of the feudal system were here combined, without any of its atoning advantages. It is true that an executive composed of such divided and mutually thwarting powers must have left to the people a considerable portion of freedom; but it was a freedom, under its best aspects, stormy and insecure, and which life was passed in struggling for, not in enjoying. The dynasts themselves, being, from their position, both subjects and rulers, were, by turns, tyrants and slaves: even the monarchy itself was often regarded but as a prize to the

* "Whoever knows any thing of Irish history will readily agree, that an Irish Tanist of a royal family, even after those of that quality were deprived of the judiciary power, and not always vested with the actual command of the army, was, notwithstanding, held in such high light and consideration, as to be esteemed nothing less than a secondary king. The title of Righ-damnha, meaning king *in fieri*, was generally given to the presumptive successor of the reigning king."—*Dissert. on Laws of the Ancient Irish.*

† The following is O'Flaherty's applausive view of this system: — "He (Selden) cannot produce an instance, in all Europe, of a more ancient, perfect, or better established form of government than that of Ireland; where the sovereign power was concentered in one king, and the subaltern power, gradually descending from the five kings to the lowest classes of men, represents, and exactly resembles, the Hierarchy of the Celestial Christ, described in the verses addressed to the archangel Michael."—*Ogyg.* part i. book 1.

strongest; and faction pervaded all ranks, from the hovel to the supreme throne. Accordingly, as may be gathered from even the comparatively pacific events I have selected, commotion and bloodshed were, in those times, the ordinary course of public affairs. Among the numerous occupants of thrones, the tenure of authority and of life was alike brief; and it is computed that, of the supreme kings who wielded the sceptre, before the introduction of Christianity, not one seventh part died a natural death, the remaining sovereigns having been taken off in the field, or by murder. The same rivalry, the same temptations to violence, were in operation throughout all the minor sovereignties: every provincial king, every head of a sept, had his own peculiar sphere of turbulence, in which, on a smaller scale, the same scenes were enacted; in which the law furnished the materials of strife, and the sword alone was called in to decide it.

Among the many sources of this discord must not be forgotten those tributes, or supplies, which, in return for the subsidies granted to them by their superiors, the inferior princes were bound to furnish. This exchange of subsidy and tribute, — the latter being usually paid in cattle, clothes, utensils, and, frequently, military aid *, — was carried on proportionably through all the descending scale of dynasties, and its mutual obligations enforced as strictly between the lord of the smallest rath and his dependents, as between the monarch and his subordinate kings. Among the various forms in which tribute was exacted, not the least oppressive were those periodical progresses of the monarch, during which he visited the courts of the different provincial

* There is extant a book containing the laws of these different subsidies and tributes, called the Leabhar na Cceart, or Book of Rights, and attributed to St Benin, the favourite disciple of St. Patrick. It is clear, however, from the corslets and suits of armour so profusely enumerated in the list of royal gifts, that these "State Laws of Subsidies," as Vallancey styles them, must have been of a much later date; not more ancient, probably, than those songs and tales, bearing the name of the poet Oisin, in which a similar display of rich armour is prematurely introduced. An account of this curious volume may be found in the Trans Iberno-Celt. Soc., and in Vallancey's Dissert. on the Laws of the Ancient Irish.

kings, and was, together with his retinue, entertained, for a certain time, by each. Every inferior lord or chieftain assumed a similar privilege, and, at certain seasons, visiting from tenant to tenant, was maintained, with all his followers, at their expense. This custom was called, in after-times, (by a name not, I suspect, of Irish origin,) coshering.

Though the acceptance of subsidy from the monarch implied an acknowledgment of subordination and submission, it was of a kind wholly different from that of the feoffees, in the feudal system*, who, by the nature of their tenures, were subjected to military service; whereas, in Ireland, the subordinate princes were entirely free and independent of those above them, holding their possessions under no condition of any service or homage whatsoever.† Even in France, the great feudatories, in many instances, did not hesitate to take arms against their sovereign; and still less scrupulous, it may be supposed, were the numerous free tenants of thrones under the Irish system.‡ Sufficient pretexts for withholding tribute from the monarch were seldom wanting to the factious; and by recourse to arms alone could the sovereign, in such cases, seek redress. On the eve, sometimes, of a battle, the tributaries failed in bringing

* That there was a degree of resemblance between the feudal system and the Irish, will appear from the description given by Mr. Hallam of the state of France at the time when Hugh Capet usurped the throne. "France," says this admirable historian, "was rather a collection of states partially allied to each other, than a single monarchy. The kingdom was as a great fief, or rather a bundle of fiefs, and the king little more than one of a number of feudal nobles, differing rather in dignity than in power, from some of the rest."—*View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages.* There were, however, as I have shown above, essential differences between the two systems; and Mr. Hallam himself, in speaking of the constitution of ancient Ireland, remarks that the relations borne by the different ranks of chieftains to each other and to the crown, may only "loosely be called federal."—*Constitut. Hist.* vol. iii.

† This principle was retained even after the subjection of the country to the English. "The Irish lords," says sir J. Davis, "did only promise to become tributary to Henry II., and such as pay tribute are not properly subjects, but sovereigns."

‡ According to Vallancey, even the monarch himself was no more exempt from attack than the rest of his royal brethren:—"Most certain it is, that the provincial kings and other sovereigns never acknowledged any supreme right in these pretenders to monarchy, but always asserted their own independency against them at the point of the sword; as appears most glaringly from the Irish Annals."—See Vallancey's clever Dissertation on

up their promised aid; or, still worse, entered the field reluctantly, and, on the first attack, took flight. *

Under any circumstances, so general and constant a state of warfare must, by rendering impossible the cultivation of the peaceful arts, prove fatal to the moral advancement of the people; but the civil and domestic nature of the feuds in which the Irish were constantly engaged, could not but render them, beyond all other species of warfare, demoralising and degrading. To the invasion of a foreign land men march with a spirit of adventure, which throws an air of chivalry even around rapine and injustice; while they who resist, even to the death, any invasion of their own, are sure of enlisting the best feelings of human nature in their cause. But the sanguinary broils of a nation armed against itself have no one elevating principle to redeem them, and are inglorious alike in victory and defeat. Whatever gives dignity to other warfare was wanting in these personal, factious feuds. The peculiar bitterness attributed to family quarrels marks also the course of civil strife; and that flow of generous feeling which so often succeeds to fierce hostility between strangers, has rarely, if ever, been felt by parties of the same state who have been once arrayed in arms against each other. One of the worst results, indeed, of that system of law and government under which Ireland first started into political existence, and retained, in full vigour of abuse, for much more than a thousand years, was the constant obstacles which it presented to the growth of a public national spirit, by separating the mass of the people into mutually hostile tribes, and accustoming each to merge all thought of the general peace or welfare in its own factious views, or the gratification of private revenge.

That separate states may be so bound in federate union as to combine effectively for all the great purposes

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the Laws of the Ancient Irish, written by him at the commencement of his career, before the Orientalism of our Irish antiquities had taken such a disturbing hold of his imagination.

* Leland, Preliminary Discourse.

of peace and war, is sufficiently proved by more than one historical instance. But there was no such form or principle of cohesion in the members of the Irish pentarchy. The interposing power assigned, theoretically, to the monarch, became of little effect in practice, and, in moments of peculiar violence, when most wanted, was always least efficient. Part of the business, we are told, of the triennial assemblies held at Tara was to hear appeals against tyrannical princes, and interpose for the redress of wrongs. But even granting these conventions to have been held regularly, which appears more than doubtful*, it is plain that in the rapid succession of daily scenes of blood which stained the Irish annals, an assembly convened but once in every three years must have exercised but a tardy and soon-forgotten influence.

Such a course of discord and faction, prolonged, as it was, through centuries, could not fail to affect materially the general character of the nation, and to lay deep the seeds of future humiliation and weakness. A people divided thus among themselves must have been, at all times, a ready prey for the invader; and the fatal consequences of such disunion was shown most lamentably, a few centuries after this period, when, as will be seen, by Irish assistance alone were the Danish marauders enabled to preserve the footing they so long and so ruinously held in the country.† By the same causes, though existing, perhaps, in a much less aggravated degree, were the Celts, both of Britain and Gaul, brought so easily under the dominion of the Romans.

* If we may believe O'Halloran, the meetings of the great Fes of Teamor were interrupted even for centuries. In speaking of the convention held in the reign of Ugony the Great, he says, "This, by the by, is the first instance for above two centuries of the meeting of the Feis Tamarach, or General Convention of the Estates of the Kingdom at Tara, except such a one as was appointed by Ciombhaoth, of which I have not sufficient authority positively to affirm."—Vol. ii. chap. v.

† "The annals of the country bear unanimous testimony to the melancholy truth, that in these plundering expeditions they (the Danes) were frequently aided by some of the native Irish princes, who, either anxious to diminish the preponderating power of some neighbouring chieftain, or desirous to revenge some real or imaginary insult received, or, perhaps, willing to share in the spoils of an opulent neighbour, were always forward to join the common enemy."—*O'Reilly, on the Brehon Laws, Trans. R.I.A.* vol. xiv.

The politic use to which the rival factions among the Gauls might be turned, could not escape the acute observation of Cæsar; and history, which has left untold the name of the recreant Irishman who, as we have seen, proffered his treasonable services in the camp of Agricola, has, with less charity, recorded that of the British chief, Mandubratius, who, from motives of mere personal revenge, invited Cæsar into Britain.* Even in the earliest periods of Irish history may be detected some traces of this faithless spirit, which internal dissensions and mutual distrust are sure to generate among a people; and the indistinct story of the flight of Labhra, a Leinster prince, into Gaul, and his return from thence at the head of Gaulish troops, sufficiently intimates that such appeals to foreign intervention were, even in Agricola's time, not new.

While such were the evils arising from the system according to which power was distributed, no less mischiefs flowed from the laws which regulated the distribution of property. In all cases where property was connected with chieftainry, the right of succession was regulated in the same manner as that of the succession to the throne. During the lifetime of the reigning chief, some person of the sept, his brother, son, or cousin, was appointed by election to succeed him; and lands devolved in this manner were, like the inheritance of the crown, exempt from partition. To the chosen successors of kings the title of Roydamna was in general applied; but the person appointed to succeed one of the inferior chiefs was always called a Tanist. Wherever inheritances were not connected with either royalty or chieftainry, their descent was regulated by the custom of Gavelkind, — a usage common to both Gothic and Celtic nations, — and the mode in which property was partitioned and re-partitioned under this

* According to the etymologist Baxter, the name of Mandubratius signifies "the Betrayer of his Country," and was affixed to this chieftain, in consequence of his treason: —"Inde populari Cassivelanorum convicio, *Mandu bratur* tanquam *Patriæ proditor* appellatus est."

law, threw a constant uncertainty round its tenure, and in time frittered away its substance.

On the death of the Cean Finné, or head of a sept, his successor, who became such not by inheritance, but by election, or strong hand, assembled all the males of the sept, and divided the lands, at his discretion, between them. Whenever any of these inferior tenants died, the sept was again called together, and their several possessions being all thrown into hotch-potch, a new partition of all was made; in which the son of him who had died did not receive the portion his father had possessed, but a share of the whole was, according to seniority, allotted to every male of the sept. As soon as another tenant died, the tenure of the property was again disturbed, and the same process of partition, in the same invariable mode, repeated. It appears that to the Cean Finné, or head of the family, was reserved a chief rent on the gavelled lands, which maintained his power and influence over the members of the sept; and, in the event of any of them forfeiting or dying without issue, secured a reversion to him of the property of the gavel lands so held.*

By the custom of Gavelkind, as it existed among the Irish, females of every degree were precluded from the inheritance; while illegitimate sons were equally entitled with the legitimate to their portions of the land. The exclusion of females from inheritance†, — a law

* "It is also said, that when the gavel was made by the father, after his death the equal share which he allotted to himself, went to the eldest son, according to the maxim of the patriarchs, who allowed a double proportion to the first born. And, lastly, like the twin tenure of Kent, it was not subject to escheat for treason or felony."—*D'Alton, Essay on the Antiquities of Ireland.*

† Consistently with his notion that the Britons and the Irish were derived from the same stock, the Historian of Manchester represents this custom as existing also in Britain; but at the same time, for this, as well as for many other Irish usages, which he endeavours to prove common to both countries, refers to evidence relating to Ireland alone. It is difficult, indeed, upon any point, to place much faith in an historian who, to prove that the descent of the crown among the Britons flowed in the course of hereditary and lineal succession, tells us gravely that "Trenmor, Trathal, Comhal, and Fingal—father, son, grandson, and great grandson—successively inherited the monarchy of Morven for their patrimony."—*Hist. of Manchester*, book I. chap. viii. sect. 2.

characteristic of those times, when lands were won and held on condition of military service alone, — was common to the Irish with most other early nations* as well Teutons as Celts; though it is a mistake to suppose that all the Teutonic tribes adopted it.† The admission of natural children, however, to a legal right of inheritance, may be pronounced a custom peculiar to Ireland. General Vallancey, in his zeal to ennoble all that is connected with Irish antiquity, endeavours to show that this custom is of patriarchal origin, citing, as his only instance, that of the children of Jacob by the handmaids of his wives Leah and Rachel, who enjoyed, among the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, a station equal to that of the children of his solemnly married wives. But the instance, besides being a solitary one, as well as attended with peculiar circumstances, is by no means sufficient to prove that such was the patriarchal custom; while, on the other hand, the significant act of Abraham, in presenting only gifts to his natural children, and separating them from his son Isaac, marks, as definitely as could be required, the distinction then drawn between legitimate and illegitimate children. ‡

* Mr. O'Reilly (*Essay on the Brehon Laws*) denies that females in Ireland were excluded from the inheritance of lands; but unfortunately adduces no authority in support of his assertion. "If it would not extend this Essay (he says) to an unreasonable length, examples might be given from the ancient Irish laws sufficient to prove that women exercised the right of chiefry over lands properly their own, and had a power to dispose of all their chattel property at their pleasure." He afterwards adds, "But supposing that Irish women did not enjoy landed property, the same must be said of the women of several other ancient nations." This sort of reversionary successor resembles, in some respects, the adscititious Cæsars, or presumptive heirs of the imperial office, among the Romans.

† "In a word," says General Vallancey, "all the Teutonic or German nations excluded the daughters from sharing with their brothers or other heirs male in the father's landed inheritance." This is not, however, the case. In the Burgundian law, one of the most ancient codes of the barbarians, is the following passage: — "Inter Burgundiones id volumus custodiri, ut si quis filium non reliquerit, in loco filii filia in patris matrisque hereditate succedat." The reader will find this, and other instances to the same purpose, cited in an able article on Mr. Hallam's Middle Ages, Edin. Review, No. lix.

‡ It is assserted by Eustathius, that, among the Greeks, as low as the time of the Trojan war, illegitimate children stood on equal grounds of favour with the legitimate; but, except occasionally, as in such instances as that of Teucer, where the high rank of both parents throw a lustre

As, in all communities, property is the pervading cement of society, a state of things such as has been just described, in which its tenure was kept, from day to day, uncertain, and its relations constantly disturbed, was perhaps the least favourable that the most perverted ingenuity could have devised, for either the encouragement of civilisation or the maintenance of peace.* The election of a Tanist, too, with no more definite qualifications prescribed than that he should be chosen from among the oldest and most worthy of the sept, opened, whenever it occurred, as fertile a source of contention and rivalry as a people, ready at all times for such excitement, could desire. However great the advantages attending an equal division of descendible property, in communities advanced sufficiently in habits of industry to be able to profit by those advantages, the effect of such a custom among a people like the Irish, the great bulk of whom were in an uncivilised state, was evidently but to nurse in them that disposition to idleness which was one of the main sources of their evils, and to add to their other immunities from moral restraint, the want of that powerful influence which superior wealth must always enable its possessor to exercise. Had there been any certainty in the tenure of the property, when once divided, most of the evils attending the practice might have been

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round the offence, or in cases where a god was called in to bear the burthen of the offspring, there appears, among the Greeks, to have been as much disgrace attached to illegitimacy, as among any other people. So far were their laws from allowing children of this description to inherit, that, in fixing the utmost amount of money which it was lawful for a father, at any time, to give them, it was strictly provided that such sum could only be given during his lifetime.

* In speaking of the annual partition of their lands, by the ancient Germans, as described by Cæsar (lib. vi. cap. 22.), Sir F. Palgrave says, "If, as we are told by Cæsar, the Germans wished to discourage agriculture and civilisation, the means were excellently adapted to the end; and to understand the rural economy of the barbaric nations, we must always keep in mind that their habitations were merely encampments upon the land. Instead of firm and permanent mansions, constituting not only the wealth, but the defence of the wealth of the owner, we must view the Teuton and the Celt dwelling in wattled hovels and turf-built sheelings, which could be raised in the course of a night, and abandoned without regret or sacrifice, when the partition of the district compelled every inhabitant to accept a new domicile. Such was the state of Ireland."—Vol. i. chap. 3.

escaped. But the new partition of all the lands, whenever a death occurred in the sept, and the frequent removal or translation of the inferior tenants from one portion to another, produced such uncertainty in the tenure of all possessions, as made men reckless of the future, and completely palsied every aim of honest industry and enterprise. By the habits of idleness thus engendered, the minds of the great mass of the people were left vacant and restless, to seek employment for themselves in mischief, and follow those impulses of wild and ungoverned passion, of which their natures were so susceptible.

One of the worst political consequences of these laws of property was, that, by their means, the division of the people into tribes or clans, so natural in the first infancy of society, was confirmed and perpetuated. The very warmth and fidelity with which the members of each sept combined among themselves, but the more alienated them from every other part of the community, and proportionably diminished their regard for the general welfare.

Another evil of the social system, under such laws, was the false pride that could not fail to be engendered by that sort of mock kingship, that mimic sovereignty, which pervaded the whole descending scale of their grandees, down to the Ruler of a small Rath, or even the possessor of a few acres, who, as sir John Davies says, "termed himself a Lord, and his portion of land his country." As even the lowest of these petty potentates would have considered it degrading to follow any calling or trade, a multitude of poor and proud spirits were left to ferment in idleness; and, there being but little vent, in foreign warfare, for such restlessness, till towards the decline of the Roman power in Britain, it expended itself in the struggles of domestic faction and fierce civil broils. Nor was it only by the relative position of the different classes of the country, but by that also of the different races which inhabited it, that the aliment of this false pride was so abundantly ministered. The same bar-

barous right of conquest by which the Spartans held their helots in bondage, was claimed and exercised by the Scotic or dominant caste of Ireland, not merely over the great mass of the population, but also over the remains of the earliest colonists — the Belgians and Damnonians. Leaving to the descendants of these ancient people only the mechanic and servile occupations, their masters reserved to themselves such employments as would not degrade their high original; and it was not till the reign of Tuathal, as we have seen, when a committee, empowered by a general assembly of the states, took the management of the trade and manufactures into their care, that any of the ruling caste condescended to employ themselves in such pursuits. But, besides this subject or conquered class, whose position, in relation to their Scotic masters, corresponded, in some respects, with that of the Coloni among the Franks, and the Ceorls among the Anglo-Saxons, there were also purchased slaves, still lower, of course, in the social scale, and forming an article of regular commerce among the Irish both at this period and for many centuries after. We shall see that St. Patrick, whom, as I have already stated, the soldiers of the monarch Nial carried off as a captive from the coast of Armoric Gaul, was, on his arrival in Ireland, sold as a common slave.

It has been already remarked that the system of polity maintained in Ireland bore, in many respects, a resemblance to the feudal; and some of those writers who contend for a northern colonisation of this country, have referred to the apparently Gothic character of her institutions, as a confirmation of their opinion. In all probability, however, the elements of what is called the feudal system had existed in Ireland, as well as in Britain and Gaul, many ages before even the oldest date usually assigned to the first introduction of feudal law into Europe; being traceable, perhaps, even to the landing of the first colonies on these shores, when, in parcelling out their new territory, and providing for its defence, there would naturally be established, between

the leaders and followers, in such an enterprise, those relations of fealty and protection, of service and reward, which the common object they were alike engaged in would necessarily call forth, and in which the principle and the rudiments of the feudal policy would be found. It has been shown by Montesquieu, from the law of the Burgundians, that when that Vandalic nation first entered Gaul, they found the tenure of land by service already existing among the people.*

Little doubt, therefore, as there is of a Scythic or Gothic colony having, about a century or two before our era, gained possession of Ireland, no evidence thereof is to be looked for in the laws and usages of that country, which, on the contrary, bear impressed on them the marks of Celtic antiquity; having existed, perhaps, through at least as many centuries before the coming of St. Patrick, as they are known to have continued to exist after that event, and with scarcely a shadow of change.

In attempting to estimate the probable degree of civilisation which the people of Ireland, in those early ages, may have attained, it will be found that the picture of their state transmitted to us, as well in their own annals as in the representations of others, is made up of direct contrasts †; and that there is not a feature in their history, indicative of an advance in social refinement, that is not counteracted by some other stamped with the strongest impress of barbarism. It is only by compounding between these two opposite extremes, that a just medium can be attained, and that the true, or at

* "Il est dit, dans la loi des Bourguignons, que quand ces peuples établirent dans les Gaules, ils reçurent les deux tiers des terres, et le tiers des serfs. La servitude de la glèbe étoit donc établie dans cette partie de la Gaule avant l'entrée des Bourguignons."—Liv. xxx. chap. 10.

† The character of the Issedones, a people of antiquity mentioned by Herodotus, was, in like manner, represented in perfectly different aspects to the world. While, like the ancient Irish, they were accused of feeding on the flesh of their parents, there are mentioned qualities belonging to them, characteristic of a refined people. "They venerate justice," says Herodotus, "and allow their females to enjoy equal authority with the men." It is in the same book of his work where he attributes to them this mark of social refinement, that he tells us they cooked and ate their dead parents.

least probable, state of the case, can be collected from such evidence.

The double aspect, indeed, under which the ancient character of the country thus glimmers upon us, through the mists of time, has divided the writers who treat of her antiquities into two directly opposite parties; and as if even the history of Ireland was fated to be made a subject of faction, the contest has been carried on by the respective disputants, with a degree of vehemence and even bitterness which, on a question relating to personages and events so far removed into past ages, appears not a little extraordinary. While, on the one side, the warm zealots in the cause of Ireland exalt to such a height the standard of her early civilisation, as to place it on a level with that of the proudest states of antiquity, — describing the sumptuous palaces of her kings, the grand assemblies of her legislators, the institutions of her various orders of chivalry, and the collegiate retreats of her scholars, — while thus, the Keatings, Walkers, O'Hallorans, availing themselves as well of the falsehood as of the facts of Irish tradition and history, have agreed in picturing the early times of their country as a perfect golden age of glory, political wisdom, and refinement; their opponents, the Ledwiches and Pinkertons, alike confident in the strength of their evidence, pronounce the whole of the very same period to have been one unreclaimed waste of ignorance and barbarism.

The chief authorities upon which this latter view of the question rests, are, among the Greek writers, Diodorus Siculus and Strabo; and among the Romans, Pomponius Mela and Solinus. By all these four writers, who flourished, at successive intervals, from a period just preceding the Christian era to about the middle of the third century, Ireland is represented to have been, at the respective times when they lived, in a state of utter savageness. According to Strabo* and

* The charges of Strabo against Ireland are contained in the following passage: — Περι ης ουδεν εχομεν λεγειν σαφες, πλην ὁτι ανθρωποφαγοι τε ουτες και πολυφαγοι,

Diodorus *. the natives were in the habit of feeding upon human flesh ; the former writer adding, that the corpses of their parents were their favourite food, and that they committed incest publicly. The description of them by Pomponius Mela is more general, but fully as strong: "They had no sense whatever," he says, "of virtue or religion †:" and Solinus also, in mentioning some of their barbarous customs, declares "that they made no distinction between right and wrong." ‡

Were there not strong grounds for calling in question their claims to authority, as regards Ireland, the evidence of these writers would possess, of course, considerable weight. But the truth is, to none of them, and, least of all, to the two most ancient and respectable of the number, Diodorus and Strabo, is any attention, on the subject of a country so wholly unknown to them, to be paid. The ready reception given by Diodorus to all stray fictions, even in those parts of his work not professedly fabulous, would, in itself, justify some degree of distrust in any statements of his not otherwise sustained. But in the case of Ireland there was, in addition to this too easy belief, an entire ignorance on the subject. Writing his great work before the Romans had made any settlement in Britain, he but shared in the general darkness then prevailing, both among Romans and Greeks, with regard to the state, history, and even geographical position of the British Isles. § More than half a century after Diodorus had completed his history, we find

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(al. ποηφαγοι) τους δε πατερας τελευτησαντας κατεσθιειν εν καλω τιθεμενοι και φανερως μισγεσθαι ταις τε αλλαις γυναιξι και μητρασι και αδελφαις.—Lib. iv.

* "They eat men," says Diodorus, in speaking of the Gauls, "like the Britons inhabiting Iris, or Irin." Φασι τινας ανθρωπους εσθιειν, ὡστε και των βρεττανων τους κατοικουντας την ονομαζομενην Ι.ιν. — Lib v. Of the application of this passage to Ireland, Rennel thus doubtfully speaks: —"It is not altogether certain, though highly probable, that the country intended is Ireland."

† Omnium virtutum ignari, pictatis admodum expertes. — Lib. iii. c. 6.

‡ Fas atque nefas eodem animo ducunt.

§ Diodorus himself acknowledges that, at the time when he wrote, the British isles were among the regions least known to the world: —'Ηκιστα πεπτωκεν υπ' την κοινην ανθρωπων επιγνωσιν. — Lib iii.

Pomponius Mela declaring, that until the expedition of the emperor Claudius, then in progress, Britain had been shut out from the rest of the world.* When such, till that period, had been the general ignorance respecting Britain it may be judged how secluded from the eyes of Europe must have been the still more western island in her neighbourhood; and how little known its internal state, except to those Celtic and Iberian tribes of Spain, with whom the commerce which then frequented the Irish harbours, must have been chiefly interchanged. It is, indeed, curious, as contrasted with the reports of her brute barbarism just cited, that the first authentic glimpse given of the state of Ireland by the Romans, should be to disclose to us thus a scene of busy commerce in her harbours, and of navigators in her waters; while, to complete the picture, at the same moment, one of her subordinate kings was a guest, we are told, in the tent of Agricola, and negotiating with him for military aid.

The geographer Strabo, another of the witnesses adduced in proof of Irish barbarism, was equally disqualified with Diodorus from giving evidence upon the subject, and from precisely the same cause, — his entire ignorance of all relating to it. Even on matters lying within the sphere of his own peculiar science, this able geographer has, in his account of Ireland, fallen into the most gross and presumptuous errors†; — presumptuous, inasmuch as some of them were maintained in direct and wilful defiance of what had been delivered down, upon the same points, by the ancient Greek geographers, who, from following closely in the steps of the Phœnicians, were, in most instances, correct. It ought, however, in justice to Strabo, to be mentioned, that he prefaces his account of the Irish brutalities by

* Britannia, qualis sit qualesque progeneret, mox certiora et magis explorata dicentur. Quippe tamdiu clausam aperit ecce Principum Maximus, Claudius. — *De Sit. Orb.* lib. iii.

† Among others of these errors, he represents Ireland so far to the north of Britain, as to be almost uninhabitable from extremity of cold.—Lib. ii. As far as we have at present the means of judging, his predecessors Eratosthenes and Pytheas were far more correctly informed as to the geography of the western parts of Europe.

admitting that he had not received it from any trustworthy authority.*

How little could have been known of Ireland at the time when Mela wrote, may be inferred from the fact which he himself tells us, that even Britain was then, for the first time, about to be made known to her invaders. But many a British campaign took place after that event, before Ireland was even thought of; and, till the time of Agricola's expedition, it was, to the Romans, an undiscovered land. With regard to Solinus, besides that the period at which he lived seems to be altogether uncertain, he is allowed, in general, to have been but an injudicious compiler from preceding writers, and little stress, therefore, is to be laid on his authority.

It is, then, manifest, that all the evidence derived from foreign sources, to prove the barbarous state of the Irish before the Christian era, must, from the very nature of the authorities themselves, be considered worthless and null; while the numerous testimonies which Ireland still can produce, in her native language, her monuments, her ancient annals and traditions, all concur in refuting so gross and gratuitous an assumption. Having disposed thus of the chief, if not the only strong grounds of one of the two conflicting hypotheses, to which the subject of Irish antiquities has given rise, I am bound to deal no less unsparingly with that other and far more agreeable delusion, which would make of Ireland, in those early ages, a paragon of civilisation and refinement, — would exalt the splendour of her Royal Palaces, the romantic deeds of her Red-Branch Knights, the Celestial Judgments of her Brehons, and the high privileges and functions of her Bards. That there is an outline of truth in such representations, her most authentic records testify; — it is the filling up of this mere outline which is, for the most part, overcharged and false. The songs and legends of the country are, in such descriptions, confounded with her

* Και ταυτα δ' ουτω λεγομεν, ως ουκ εχοντες αξιοπιστους μαρτυρας. — Lib. iv.

history; her fictions have been taken for realities, and her realities heightened into romance. Those old laws and customs of the land, so ruinous, as we have seen, to peace and industry, could not have been otherwise than fatal to the progress of civilisation; nor can any one who follows the dark and turbid course of our ancient history, through the unvaried scenes of turbulence and rapine which it traverses, suppose for an instant, that any high degree of general civilisation could co-exist with habits and practices so utterly subversive of all the elements of civilised life.

At the same time, in speculating on the aspect of Irish society at any period whatsoever, full allowance is to be made for those anomalies which so often occur in the course of affairs in that country, and which, in many instances, baffle all such calculations respecting its real condition, as are founded on those ordinary rules and principles by which other countries are judged. Even in the days of Ireland's Christian fame, when, amidst the darkness that hung over the rest of Europe, she stood as a light to the nations, and sent apostles in all directions from her shores, — even in that distinguished period of her history, we shall find the same contrasts, the same contrarieties of national character, presenting themselves; insomuch that it would be according as the historical painter selected his subjects of portraiture — whether from the calm and holy recesses of Glendalough and Inisfallen, or the rath of the rude chief and the fierce councils of rebel kings — that the country itself would receive either praise or reprobation, and be delineated as an island of savages or of saints.

But there is an era still more strongly illustrative of this view of Irish character, and at the same time recent enough to be within the memory of numbers still alive. That it is possible for a state of things to exist, wherein some of the best and noblest fruits of civilisation may be most conspicuously displayed in one portion of the community, while the habitual violences of

barbarism are, at the same time, raging in another, is but too strongly proved by the history of modern Ireland during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century, — a period adorned, it will hardly be denied, by as many high and shining names as ever graced the meridian of the most favoured country, and yet convulsed, through its whole course, by a furious struggle between the people and their rulers, maintained on both sides with a degree of ferocity, a reckless violence of spirit, worthy only of the most uncivilised life. Such an anomalous state of society, so fresh within recollection, might abate, at least, if not wholly remove, any confidence in the conclusion, that, because the public annals of ancient Ireland leave little else in the memory but a confused chaos of factions and never-ending feuds, she could not therefore have arrived at a higher rank in civilisation than such habits of turbulence and lawlessness are usually found to indicate.

In the ill repute of the ancient Irish for civilisation, their neighbours, the Britons, equally shared; and the same charges of incest, community of wives, and other such abominations, which we find alleged against the Irish, are brought also against the natives of Britain by Cæsar and Dion Cassius.* It is possible that, in both instances, the imputations may be traced to that policy of the commercial nations of antiquity which led them to impute all manner of atrocities and horrors to the inhabitants of places where they had established a profitable commerce.† We have seen with what jealous care the Phœnician merchants, and subsequently, also, the Carthaginians and Greeks, endeavoured to

* Uxoris habent deni duodenique inter se communas, et maxime fratres cum fratribus parentesque cum liberis — *De Bell. Gal* lib. v. cap. 16. In referring to the charges of these two historians against the Britons, Whitaker says, "The accusation is too surely as just as it is scandalous." —*Hist. of Manchester*, book I. chap. x. sect. 5. In a sermon of St. Chrysostom, quoted by Camden (Introduct. lxx.) that father exclaims, "How often in Britain did men eat the flesh of their own kind!"

† In the opinion of Pownal, this policy of the ancients, in "keeping people away from their possessions," will account for the tales of the Anthropophagi, the Syrens, and all the other "metamorphosic fables, turning policied and commercial people into horrid and savage monsters."

turn the attention of the world from their trade with the British Isles, so as to prevent all commercial rivals, from interfering with their monopoly. A part of this policy it may have, perhaps, been to represent the Irish as brutes and cannibals, and their neighbours the Britons as little better; and the traders who crowded the ports of the former island in the first century would be sure to encourage the same notion. So well and long did these traditional stigmas adhere, that the poet Ausonius, in the fourth century, pronounces the appellation Briton, to be then synonymous with that of bad or wicked man *; and about the same period, — not many years previously to the great naval expedition of the Irish monarch, Nial-Giallach, against the coasts of Britain, — we find St. Jerome gravely describing an exhibition which he had himself witnessed in his youth, in Gaul, of some cannibal Scots or Irishmen, regaling themselves upon human flesh.†

Much the same sort of inconsistencies and contradictions as are found to embarrass and render difficult any attempt to estimate the social and moral condition of the ancient Irish, will be found also in the facts illustrative of their state of advancement in those arts, inventions, and contrivances, which are the invariable results of civilised life. That, so early as the first century, their harbours were much resorted to by navigators and merchants, the authority of Tacitus leaves us no room to doubt; and their enjoyment of a foreign trade may be even referred to a much remoter period, as we find Ptolemy, in citing the testimony of one of those more ancient geographers, from whom his own materials on the subject of Ireland are mostly derived, remarking, among his other claims to

* Aut Brito hic non est Silvius, aut malus est.—*Epig.* 110.

This poet has a whole string of pointless epigrams on the same quibble. Cellarius, in quoting one of them, says, "Male illo tempore Britanni audiebant: ideo, epigrammate 112, — "Nemo bonus Brito est."

† Quid loquar de cæteris nationibus cum ipse adolescentulus in Gallia viderim Scotos, gentem Britannicam, humanis vesci carnibus."—*S. Hieron. contra Jovinian.* lib. ii.

credibility, his having rejected all such accounts of that country as had been gathered from merchants who had visited her ports with a view to traffic alone.*

Notwithstanding this clear and authentic evidence of her having been, not merely in the first century, but in times preceding our era, in possession of a foreign commerce, it appears equally certain that neither then, nor for many ages after, had the interior trade of the country advanced beyond the rude stage of barter; nor had coined money, that indispensable ingredient of civilised life †, been yet brought into use. It is true, both O'Flaherty and Keating tell us of a coinage of silver in the reign of the monarch Eadna Dearg, no less than 466 years before the birth of Christ, at a place called Argeatre, as they say, on the banks of the river Suir, in Ossory. But it is plain that the name here, as in many other such traditions, was the sole foundation of the fable, — etymology having been, in all countries, one of the most fertile sources of fiction and conjecture. ‡ Equally groundless may be pronounced the account given by Keating of mints erected and money coined for the service of the state, about the time of the commencement of St. Patrick's apostleship. It is certain that, for many centuries after this period, the custom of paying gold by the weight may be traced; and so long did cattle, according to the primitive meaning of the term pecunia, continue to be the measure of value, that, so late as the beginning of the sixteenth century the celebrated Book of Ballymote § (a com-

* Thus, in the Latin version of Ptolemy: — "Atqui et ipse Marinus Tyrius mercatorum relationibus nequaquam fidem adhibere videtur. Itaque Philemonis sermoni longitudinem Insulæ Hiberniæ ab ortu occasum usque xx. dierum esse tradenti haudquaquam adstipulatur, dicens hoc eos a mercatoribus percepisse, hos enim ait veritatis in derogationem haud curari, intentos mercimoniis."—*Geog.* lib. ii. c. 11.

† "Soyez seul, et arrivez, par quelque accident, chez un peuple inconnu, si vous voyez une pièce de monnoie, comptez que vous êtes arrivé chez une nation policée."— *Montesquieu*, l. xviii. c. 15.

‡ By the same ready process another Irish monarch, Acpy Fuarchis, who reigned A.M. 3508, was made the inventor of Currachs, or wicker boats; his name, Fuarchis, signifying a boat not well joined.—*Ogy.* part iii. chap. 34.

§ For an account of the origin and transmission of this celebrated Book of Records, which was chiefly compiled by Solomon O'Drum, see Trans. Iberno-Celt. Society.

pilation from the works of some earlier Irish seanachies), was purchased by a certain Hugh O'Donnel for 140 milch cows ; — a transaction combining in itself, rather curiously, at once the high estimation of literary merit which marks an advanced state of society, and a mode of payment belonging only to its very earliest stages.

While in their home commerce such evidence of backwardness presents itself, their means of carrying on a foreign trade appear to have been equally limited. For any distance beyond their own and the immediately neighbouring coasts, the resources of their navigation were but rude and insecure, consisting chiefly of those large, open boats, called Currachs, which, like the light vessels of osier and leather used by the ancient Liburnians, were composed of a framework of wood and wicker, covered over with the skins of cattle or of deer. These boats, though in general navigated by oars, were capable of occasionally carrying masts and sails, — the latter being, like those of the Veneti, formed of hides. There was also in use, among the Irish, for plying upon their rivers and lakes, small canoes, made out of trees ; and it must have been of this sort of rude craft that Giraldus spoke, when he said that the tail of a live salmon could upset them.* That the currachs were considered to a certain degree seaworthy, may be judged from the expeditions in which they were sometimes employed. It was in a skiff of this kind, described by Columba's biographer, as furnished with sails, that St. Cormac is said to have more than once ventured forth in quest of some lonely isle in the ocean where he might fix his retreat † ; and in one of these exploratory cruises he was out of sight of land, we are told, for fourteen days and nights. ‡

* Giraldus speaks more particularly of the British currach.—*Descript. Camb.* "Cum autem naviculam salmo injectus cauda fortiter percusserit non absque periculo plerumque vecturam priter et vectorem evertit."

† Fremum in oceano quærere.

‡ Nam cum ejus navis a terris per quatuordecem æstei temporis dies totidemque noctes, plenis velis Austro flante vento, ad septentrionalis plagam cæli directo excurrere cursu. — *Adamnan. De S Columb. Abbate Hiensi.*

It is among the many remarkable proofs of that identity of character and customs which the Irish preserved through so many ages, that, so far back as the time when Himilco visited these seas, the very same sort of boats were in use among the natives; and that the holy men of the "Sacred Island" were then seen passing, in their hide-covered barks, from shore to shore, in the very same manner as was practised by her saints and missionaries more than a thousand years after.*

A reverend historian, cited in a preceding part of this work, has described, as we have seen, with much pomp and circumstance, the fleet of the Irish monarch, Nial Giallach, with the shield of the admiral at the mast head, the rowers chiming their oars to the music of the harp, and other such probable appurtenances. On the same poetical authority from whence this description is derived, we are told by another writer of the names given by the Irish mariners to particular stars, by whose light they were accustomed to steer in their voyages, — such as the Guide to Erin, the Guide to Scandinavia, the Guide of Night.† Such false pictures of manners, put forth in grave works, and on such authority as that of Ossian, are little less than deliberate insults on a reader.

To the facts above stated, as apparently inconsistent with the notion of the Irish having been, in those times, a trading people, may be opposed, on the other side, the actual traces still remaining of ancient causeways and roads throughout the country.‡ One great commercial road, having walls, we are told, on each side, strengthened with redoubts, was carried from Galway along the south

* Sed rei ad miraculum
Navigia junctis semper aptant pellibus,
Corioque vastum sæpe percurrunt salum.
Fest. Avien. Ora Maritim.

† Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary.

‡ See Brewer, Introduct., for remarks on the vestiges of "ecclesiastical and commercial paved roads still observable in several parts of Ireland."— "These public ways," he adds, "appear to have led from such sea-ports as were formerly of principal consideration to the interior of the country."

boundaries of the people called anciently the Auteri, and along, by the borders of the counties of Meath and Leinster, to Dublin.* If the conjecture of Whitaker, too, be adopted, that the great road, called the Watling Street, extending from Dover, through London, as far as Anglesey in Wales, was originally denominated, by the ancient Britons, the Way of the Irish, it is equally probable that the causeway from Galway to Dublin formed a part of the same line of conveyance; and that articles of commerce from the western and central parts of Ireland may have been, by this route, transmitted through Britain, and into Gaul.

Among the tests by which the civilisation of a people may be judged, their degree of advancement in the art of architecture is, perhaps, one of the least fallible; but here again the historian is encountered by the same contrasts and inconsistencies,—not merely between tradition and existing visible evidence, but also between the several remaining monuments themselves, of which some bespeak all the rudeness of an infant state of society, while others point to a far different origin, and stand as marks of a tide of civilisation long since ebbed away. In the geography of Ptolemy, we find a number of Irish cities enumerated, on some of which he even bestows the epithet illustrious, or distinguished †; and intimates that, in two of them, the cities Hybernis and Rheba, celestial observations had been made. But though it is by no means improbable that, in the time of those more ancient geographers from whom Ptolemy is known to have drawn his materials, such cities may have existed, his testimony on this point is to be received with some caution; as in Germany, where, at the time when Tacitus wrote, no other habitations were known than detached huts and caves, this geographer, who published his work but about half a century later, has contrived to conjure up no less than ninety cities. In the same manner, any inference that might be drawn

* Wood, Primitive Origin of the Irish, p. 96.
† Της δε Ιουερνιας νησου αι ενδοξοτεραι πολεις.

in favour of the civilisation of Ireland, from the supposition that those observations of the length of the solstitial days, by which the latitudes of the Irish cities were determined, had been really taken in those cities themselves, would prove, most probably, fallacious; as it is supposed that but few of the latitudes given by Ptolemy were the result of actual astronomical observation.*

Of those ancient Raths, or Hill-fortresses, which formed the dwellings of the old Irish chiefs, and belonged evidently to a period when cities were not yet in existence, there are to be found numerous remains throughout the country. This species of earthen work is distinguished from the artificial mounds, or tumuli, by its being formed upon natural elevations, and always surrounded by a rampart. Within the area thus enclosed, which was called the Rath, stood the habitations of the chieftain and his family, which were, in general, small buildings constructed of earth and hurdles, or having, in some instances, walls of wood upon a foundation of earth. In outward shape, as I have said, these dwellings of the living resembled those mounds which the Irish raised over their dead; and it is conjectured of the ancient earthen works on the Curragh of Kildare, that while the larger rath was the dwelling of the ancient chieftains of that district, the small entrenchments formed their cemetery or burial-place. If thus uncivilised were the habitations of the great dynasts of those days, it may be imagined what were the abodes of the humbler classes of the community; — though here, unfortunately, the imagination is not called upon for any effort; as, in the cottier's cabin of the present day, the disgraceful reality still exists; and two thousand years have passed over the hovel of the Irish pauper in vain.

* "Quant à la durée du jour solstitial, nous avons déjà dit, et nous verrons occasion de prouver encore, que la très grande partie de ces espèces de déterminations contenues dans le huitième livre de Ptolémée n'étoit le résultat d'aucune observation astronomique, et qu'elle n'étoit conclue que d'après les latitudes adoptées de son tems : ainsi on ne peut leur accorder aucune confiance quand elles ne sont pas appuyées sur le témoignage de quelques autres écrivains." — *Gosselin, Recherches sur la Géographie des Anciens.*

A degree still lower, however, on the scale of comfort, would have been the lot of the ancient Irish, were it true, as Ledwich and others have asserted, that they lived chiefly, in the manner of the Troglodytes, in subterranean caves. That some of those caverns, of which so great a number, both artificial and natural, have been discovered throughout Ireland, may have been used as places of refuge for the women and children during times of danger and invasion, appears to be highly probable. We find some of them described as divided into apartments, and even denoting an attempt at elegance in their construction. They have also sometimes sustaining walls of dry stonework, to confine the sides and support the flags which form the ceiling. But though they are pronounced to have been evidently subterranean houses, it is difficult to conceive human beings reduced to such abodes.*

It was among a people thus little removed from the state of the Germans in the time of Tacitus, that the Palaces of Tara and Emania, as authentic records leave us but little room to doubt, displayed their regal halls, and, however scepticism may now question their architectural merits, could boast the admiration of many a century in evidence of their grandeur. That these edifices were merely of wood is by no means conclusive either against the elegance of their structure, or the civilisation, to a certain degree, of those who erected them. It was in wood that the graceful forms of Grecian architecture first unfolded their beauty; and there is reason to believe that, at the time when Xerxes invaded Greece, most of her temples were still of this perishable material.

Not to lay too much stress, however, on these boasted

* "Some of them are excavated into the hard gravel, with the flags resting on no other support; and so low that you can only sit erect in them; that is, from three to four feet from the floor to the ceiling. I have not seen any higher than four feet..... The tradition of the country makes them granaries; but for granaries they could never have been intended, as it would have been very difficult to convey grain into them, through long and narrow passages, not more than two feet square."—*Description of a remarkable Building, &c., by F. C. Bland, Trans. R. Irish Acad.*, vol. xiv.
See, for similar "hiding-pits," as he calls them, among the Britons, King, Muniment. Antiq. book i. chap. 1.

structures of ancient Ireland, of which there is but dry and meagre mention by her annalists, and most hyperbolical descriptions by her bards, there needs no more striking illustration of the strong contrasts which her antiquities present, than that, in the very neighbourhood of the earthen rath and the cave, there should rise proudly aloft those wonderful Round Towers, bespeaking, in their workmanship and presumed purposes, a connection with religion and science, which marks their builders to have been of a race advanced in civilisation and knowledge, — a race different, it is clear, from any of those who are known, from time to time, to have established themselves in the country, and, therefore, most probably, the old aboriginal inhabitants, in days when the arts were not yet strangers on their shores.

There are yet a few other facts, strongly illustrative of this peculiar view of our antiquities, to which it may be worth while briefly to advert. Respecting the dress of the ancient Irish, we have no satisfactory information. In an account given of them by a Roman writer of the third century, they are represented as being half naked *; and the Briton Gildas, who wrote about three hundred years after, has drawn much the same picture of them.† It was only in battle, however, that they appear to have presented themselves in this barbarian fashion; and a similar custom prevailed also among the ancient Britons and Picts. But, though no particulars of the dress of the Irish, in those remote times, have reached us, enough may be collected from the accounts of a later period, when they had become more known to Europe, to satisfy us that the Milesian lord of the rath and the plebeian of the hovel had as little advanced on the scale of civilisation in their dress as in their dwellings; and that, while the latter was most probably clothed, like the lower order of Britons, in sheepskin, the chief himself wore the short woollen mantle, such as was customary, at a later

* Adhuc semi-nudi. — *Eumen. Panegyric. Vet.*

† Magis vultus pilis quam corporum pudenda, pudendisque proxima, vestibus tegentes. — *Gildas.*

period, among his countrymen, and which, according to some authorities, reached no further than the elbows; leaving, like the Rheno, or short mantle of the ancient Germans *, the remainder of the body entirely naked. There is reason to believe, however, that at that time, as well as subsequently, they may have worn coverings for the thighs and legs, or, at least, that sort of petticoat, or *fallin*, as it was called, which is known to have been worn, as well as the braccæ, by the Irish, in the time of Giraldus Cambrensis.†

Such having been the rude state of the ancient Irish, within any range of time to which our knowledge of them extends, it remains to be asked, to whom then, to what race or period, could have belonged those relics of an age of comparative refinement, those curious and costly ornaments of dress, some of the purest gold, elaborately wrought, and others of silver, which have been discovered, from time to time, in different parts of Ireland, having been dug up out of fields and bogs where they must have lain hidden for ages? ‡ Nor is it only of ornaments for the person that these precious remains consist; as there are found also among them instruments supposed to have been connected with religious worship, which are said to be of the finest gold, without any alloy, and to have, some of them, handles of silver,

* Pellibus aut parvis rhenonum tegimentis utuntur, magna corporis parte nuda. — *Cæs. de Bell. Gall.* l. vi. c. 21.

† In their dress, as well as in most other respects, to attempt to distinguish very definitely between Celts and Teutons will be found a vain and fallacious task. We have seen that the Irish and Gaulish Celts were fond of variegated dresses; and so, it appears, were the Lombards and Anglo-Saxons. "Vestimenta (says Diaconus, l. iv. c. 7.), qualia Angli-Saxones habere solent, ornata institis latioribus, vario colore contextis." The braccæ of the Irish were, like those of the Germans, tight, while the Sarmatians and Batavians preferred them large and loose.

> "Et qui te laxis imitantur, Sarmata, braccis
> Vangiones, Batavique truces." *Lucan*, l. i. 430.

‡ "Within the limits of my own knowledge," says the Rev. W. Hamilton, "golden ornaments have been found to the amount of near one thousand pounds." — *Letters concerning the Coast of Antrim.*

The superior richness of the urns and ornaments discovered in Ireland compared with those found in the English barrows, is fully acknowledged by sir Richard Hoare. "The Irish urns were," he says, "in general, more ornamented," and the articles of gold, also, "richer and more numerous." — *Tour in Ireland, General Remarks.*

chased with plated gold.* In like manner, a variety of swords and other weapons† have been discovered, the former of which would seem to have been fabricated, before iron had been brought into use for such purposes, as they are all of a mixed metal, chiefly copper, admitting of a remarkably high polish, and of a temper to carry a very sharp edge.

To attempt to reconcile, — even on the grounds already suggested, of the anomalous character of the people, — the civilised tastes, the skill in metallurgy, the forms of worship, which these various articles, in their several uses, imply, with such a state of things as prevailed in Ireland during the first ages of Christianity, appears altogether impossible; and the sole solution of this and other such contradictions, in the ancient history of the Irish, is that, at the time when they first became known to the rest of Europe, they had been long retrograding in civilisation; that, whether from the inroads of rude northern tribes, or the slowly demoralising effects of their own political institutions, they had fallen, like many other once civilised nations, into eclipse; and though, with true Celtic perseverance, still clinging to their old laws and usages, their Assemblies at Tara, their Colleges of Bards, the Great Psalter of their Antiquaries, yet preserving of the ancient fabric little more

* See Gough's Camden, vol. iv. Collectan. Hibern. vol. iv. Among other curious Irish remains, bishop Pococke produced to the Antiquarian Society a bracelet, or armilla, of fine gold. See drawing of this and of a gold bracelet in Gough, vol. iv. pl. 14. Also plate 12. for some curious instruments, supposed by Pococke to be fibulæ, while Simon and Vallancey are both of opinion that they were pateræ, used by the ancient Druids. Among the most beautiful of the ornaments discovered in Ireland have been those golden torques or collars, supposed to have been worn by the Irish Druids, as, according to Strabo, they were by the Gauls. One of these, of delicate workmanship, and of the purest gold, is in the possession of the marquis of Lansdowne.

† "One circumstance as to the swords seems to be decisive: — they are as exactly and as minutely to every apparent mark the same with the swords of sir W. Hamilton's collection, now in the British Museum, as if they came out of the same armoury. The former found in the field of Cannæ are said to be Carthaginian; these, therefore, by parity of reasoning, may likewise be said to have been of the same people." — *Governor Pownal's Account of some Irish Antiquities to the Society of Antiquarians*, 1774. "What makes these brazen swords such a valuable remnant to the Irish antiquarian is, they serve to corroborate the opinion that the Phœnicians once had footing in this kingdom." — *Campbell's Philosoph. Survey of the South of Ireland.*

than the shell, and, amidst all these skeletons of a bygone civilisation, sinking fast into barbarism. This view of the matter seems also remarkably confirmed by that interval of ignorance, and even oblivion, as to the state and fortunes of Ireland, which succeeded to the times of the geographer Pytheas, of Eratosthenes, and the Tyrian authorities of Ptolemy. By all these, and more especially the latter, the position and localities of that island appear to have been far better known than by Strabo or any of the later Greek authorities*,— a circumstance to be explained only by the supposition that those ties of intercourse, whether commercial or religious, which the Irish once maintained, it is clear, with other nations, had during this interval been interrupted, and all the light that had flowed from those sources withdrawn. Through a nearly similar course of retrogradation we shall find them again doomed to pass, after their long and dark suffering under the yoke of the Danes, when, exhausted not more by this scourge than by their own internal dissensions, they sunk from the eminent station they had so long held in the eyes of Europe, and fell helplessly into that state of abasement, and almost barbarism, in which their handful of English conquerors found them.

In the state of society which prevailed in Ireland, in the middle ages, when it differed but little, probably, from that of the period we are now considering, an eminent historian has discovered some points of resemblance to the picture represented to us of the Homeric age of Greece †; and it is certain that the style of living, as described by Homer, in the palace of Ulysses, the riot and revel in the great hall, which was the scene of the cooking as well as of the feasting,— the supposed beggar admitted of the party, and, not least, the dunghill lying in the path from the court-gate to

* Pytheam præterea increpat Strabo ut mendacem, qui Hiberniam ac Uxisamam (Ushant) ad occidentem ponit a Gallia, cum hæc omnia, ait, *ad Septentrionem vergant*. Itaque veteres geographi Hiberniæ situm definiunt melius quam scriptores seculi aurei Augusti, Himilco et Phœnices melius quam Græci vel Romani! — *Rer. Script. Hib.* prol. i. xii.

† Mitford, History of Greece, vol. i. chap. .

the hall door*, might all find a parallel in the mansions of Irish chieftains, even to a later period than that assigned by the historian.

Among the numerous other vestiges still remaining of an age of civilisation in Ireland, far anterior to any period with which her history makes us acquainted, should not be forgotten those extraordinary coal-works at Ballycastle, on the coast of Antrim, which are pronounced to have been wrought in times beyond even the reach of tradition †, and which a writer, by no means indulgent to the claims of Irish antiquities, conjectures, from the "marks of ancient operations" which they exhibit, to have been the work of some of the very earliest colonists of the country.‡ The last resource with certain theorists, respecting our antiquities, is to attribute all such works to the Danes; and to this people the ancient coal-works of Ballycastle, as well as all the other mine excavations throughout Ireland, have been assigned. But the scanty grounds assumed for such a conjecture, and the utter improbability that a people, harassed as were the Danes, and never, at any period, in peaceable possession of the country, should have found time for such slow and laborious operations of peace,

* Odyss. lib. vii.

† "The antiquity of this work is pretty evident from hence, that there does not remain the most remote tradition of it in the country; but it is still more strongly demonstrable from a natural process which has taken place since its formation; for the sides and pillars were found covered with sparry incrustations, which the present workmen do not observe to be deposited in any definite portion of time."—*Rev. W. Hamilton's Letters concerning the Coast of Antrim.*

‡ "The superior intelligence of this people (the Damnii, or Danaans), and of the Clanna Rhoboig, considered with Tacitus's account of the trade of Ireland, induce me to suppose that the coal-works at Ballycastle, on the northern coast, which exhibit marks of ancient operations, had been worked by either or both."—*Wood's Inquiry into the Primitive Inhabitants of Ireland.*

The following evidence, on this subject, is worthy of attention:—"If we may judge from the number of ancient mine excavations which are still visible in almost every part of Ireland, it would appear that an ardent spirit for mining adventure must have pervaded this country at some very remote period. In many cases, no tradition, that can be depended upon, now remains of the time or people by whom the greater part of these works were originally commenced." This experienced engineer adds, "It is worthy of remark that many of our mining excavations exhibit appearances similar to the surface workings of the most ancient mines in Cornwall, which are generally attributed to the Phœnicians."—*Report to the Royal Dublin Society, on the Metallic Mines of Leinster, in* 1828, *by Richard Griffith, Esq.*

has been already by various writers convincingly demonstrated.

Postponing the consideration of some other usages and characteristics of the Pagan Irish to a somewhat later period, when, remaining still unchanged, the materials for illustrating them will be found more ample and authentic, I shall here only advert to one or two points connected with their knowledge of the useful arts and manner of living, respecting which information, however scanty, is to be found in the writings of the ancients. Those who regard Mela as sufficient authority for the barbarous habits of the people, will not, of course, reject his evidence as to the exercise among them of agriculture and grazing: — "The climate of Iverna," says this geographer, "is unfavourable to the ripening of seeds; but so luxuriant in pasture, not only plenteous, but sweet, that the cattle fill themselves in but a small part of the day, and unless restrained from the pasture, would burst by over-eating."* Another favourite witness of the anti-Irish school, Solinus, thus speaks of the military weapons of the old natives: —"Those among them who study ornament, are in the habit of adorning the hilts of their swords with the teeth of sea-animals, which they burnish to the whiteness of ivory; for the chief glory of those people lies in their arms."† STOKE NEWINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

We have already seen that numbers of swords, made of brass, have been found in different parts of the country; and of these some are averred to be exactly of the same description with the swords found on the field of Cannæ, which are in sir William Hamilton's collection. Swords similar to these have been discovered also in Cornwall, and count Caylus has given an engraving of one, of the same kind, which he calls Gladius Hispaniensis, and which came, as it ap-

* Iverna est cæli ad maturanda semina iniqui; verum adeo luxuriosa herbis non lætis modo, sed etiam dulcibus, ut se exiguâ parte diei pecora impleant, et nisi pabulo prohibeantur, diutius pasta dissiliant. — *De Situ Orbis.*

† Qui student cultui dentibus marinarum belluarum insigniunt ensium capulos, candicant enim ad eburneam claritatem; nam præcipua viris gloria est in telis.— *Solinus, Polyhist.*

pears, from Herculaneum. It has been thought not improbable that all these weapons, the Irish as well as the others, were of the same Punic or Phœnician origin, and may be traced to those colonies on the coasts of Spain which traded anciently with the British isles. There are said to have been likewise discovered some scythe-blades of bronze, such as were attached anciently to the wheels of war chariots* ; the use of that Asiatic mode of warfare having prevailed formerly, we are told, in Ireland as well as in Britain. That for some parts of their armour, more especially their wicker shields, and bows with short arrows, the Irish were indebted to their Scythic conquerors, the Scots, appears by no means unlikely.† But the most ancient remains‡ of their weapons are the stone hatchets, and also those heads of arrows§ and spears, some of flint, and others pointed with bones, the latter resembling those which, for want of iron, were used, as Tacitus tells us, by the ancient Finlanders. ||

CHAP. X.

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO IRELAND.

THE period of Irish history on which we are now about to enter, and of which the mission of St. Patrick

* Meyrick on Ancient Armour, vol. i. One of these scythe-blades of bronze he describes as thirteen inches long.

† Ware's Antiquities, chap. 2.

‡ "Hammers of stone have been found in the copper-mines of Kerry; heads of arrows, made of flint, are often dug up, and are now esteemed the work of fairies."—*Collectan.* No. 2.

§ According to a work quoted by Meyrick, these arrows must have been more ancient than even the time of the Phœnicians. "The inhabitants of Britain and Ireland, previous to their intercourse with the Phœnicians, had merely bows, with arrows of reed, headed with flint, or pointed with bones, sharpened to an acute edge." No sooner, however, did the Phœnicians effect an amicable interchange with these islanders, than they communicated to them the art of manufacturing their warlike instruments of metal. — *Costume of the Orig. Inhab. of the British Isles.*

|| Sola in sagittis spes, quas, inopia ferri, ossibus asperant. — *German.* c. 46.

forms the principal feature, will be found to exhibit, perhaps, as singular and striking a moral spectacle as any the course of human affairs ever yet presented. A community of fierce and proud tribes, for ever warring among themselves, and wholly secluded from all the rest of the world, with an ancient hierarchy entrenched in its own venerable superstitions, and safe from the weakening infusion of the creeds of Greece or Rome, would seem to present as dark and intractable materials for the formation of a Christian people as any that could be conceived. The result proves, however, the uncertainty of such calculations upon national character, while it affords an example of that ready pliancy, that facility in yielding to new impulses and influences, which, in the Irish character, is found so remarkably combined with a fond adherence to old usages and customs, and with that sort of retrospective imagination which for ever yearns after the past.

While, in all other countries, the introduction of Christianity has been the slow work of time, has been resisted by either government or people, and seldom effected without a lavish effusion of blood, in Ireland, on the contrary, by the influence of one humble but zealous missionary, and with but little previous preparation of the soil by other hands, Christianity burst forth, at the first ray of apostolic light, and, with the sudden ripeness of a northern summer, at once covered the whole land. Kings and princes, when not themselves among the ranks of the converted, saw their sons and daughters joining in the train without a murmur. Chiefs, at variance in all else, agreed in meeting beneath the Christian banner; and the proud Druid and Bard laid their superstitions meekly at the foot of the cross; nor, by a singular blessing of Providence — unexampled, indeed, in the whole history of the church — was there a single drop of blood shed, on account of religion, through the entire course of this mild Christian revolution, by which, in the space of a few years, all Ireland

was brought tranquilly under the dominion of the Gospel.*

By no methods less gentle and skilful than those which her great Apostle employed, could a triumph so honourable, as well to himself as to his nation of willing converts, have been accomplished. Landing alone, or with but a few humble followers, on their shores, the circumstances attending his first appearance (of which a detailed account shall presently be given) were of a nature strongly to affect the minds of a people of lively and religious imaginations; and the flame, once caught, found fuel in the very superstitions and abuses which it came to consume. Had any attempt been made to assail, or rudely alter, the ancient ceremonies and symbols of their faith, all that prejudice in favour of old institutions, which is so inherent in the nation, would at once have rallied around their primitive creed; and the result would, of course, have been wholly different. But the same policy by which Christianity did not disdain to win her way in more polished countries, was adopted by the first missionaries in Ireland; and the outward forms of past error became the vehicle through which new and vital truths were conveyed.† The days devoted,

* Giraldus Cambrensis has been guilty of either the bigotry or the stupidity of adducing this bloodless triumph of Christianity among the Irish, as a charge against that people:—"Pro Christi ecclesia corona martyri nulla. Non igitur inventus est in partibus istis, qui ecclesiæ surgentis fundamenta sanguinis effusione cementaret: non fuit qui facerit hoc bonum; non fuit usque ad unum."—*Topog. Hib.* dist. iii. cap. 29.

† The very same policy was recommended by pope Gregory to Augustine and his fellow labourers in England. See his letter to the abbot Mellitus, in Bede (lib. i. c. 30.), where he suggests that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed. "Let the idols that are in them," he says, "be destroyed; let holy water be made, and sprinkled in the said temples; let altars be erected, and relics placed. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, not seeing those temples destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and, knowing and adoring the true God, may more willingly resort to the same places they were wont. .... For there is no doubt, but that it is impossible to retrench all at once from obdurate minds, because he who endeavours to ascend the highest place, rises by degrees or steps, and not by leaps." See Hume's remarks on this policy of the first missionaries. vol. i. chap. 1.

With similar views, the early Christians selected, in general, for the festivals of their church, such days as had become hallowed to the Pagans, by the celebrations of some of their religious solemnities.

from old times, to Pagan festivals, were now transferred to the service of the Christian cause. The feast of Samhin, which had been held annually at the time of the vernal equinox, was found opportunely to coincide with the celebration of Easter; and the fires lighted up, by the Pagan Irish, to welcome the summer solstice, were continued afterwards, and even down to the present day, in honour of the eve of St. John.

At every step, indeed, the transition to a new faith was smoothed by such coincidences or adoptions. The convert saw in the baptismal font, where he was immersed, the sacred well at which his fathers had worshipped. The Druidical stone on the "high places" bore, rudely graved upon it, the name of the Redeemer; and it was in general by the side of those ancient pillar-towers — whose origin was even then, perhaps, a mystery — that, in order to share in the solemn feelings which they inspired, the Christian temples arose. With the same view, the Sacred Grove was anew consecrated to religion, and the word Dair, or oak, so often combined with the names of churches in Ireland, sufficiently marks the favourite haunts of the idolatry which they superseded.* In some instances, the accustomed objects of former worship were associated, even more intimately, with the new faith; and the order of Druidesses, as well as the idolatry which they practised, seemed to be revived, or rather continued, by the Nuns of St. Bridget, in their inextinguishable fire and miraculous oak at Kildare.†

* Thus Dairmagh, now called Durrogh, in the King's County, once the site of a celebrated monastery, signifies the Oak Grove of the Plain, or the Plain of the Oaks. The name of the ancient monastery Doire-Calgaich, from whence the city of Derry was designated, recalls the memory of the hill of oaks on which it was originally erected; and the chosen seat of St. Bridget, Kildare, was but the Druid's Cell of Oaks converted into a Christian temple.

† See Giraldus, Topog. Hibern. dist. ii. cap. 34, 35, 36. 48. The tales of Giraldus, on this subject, are thus rendered by a learned but fanciful writer, the author of Nimrod:—"St. Bridget is certainly no other than Vesta, or the deity of the fire-worshippers in a female form. The fire of St. Bridget was originally in the keeping of nine virgins; but in the time of Giraldus Cambrensis there were twenty, who used to watch alternate nights; but on the twentieth night, the man whose turn it was merely to throw on the wood, crying, 'Bridget, watch thine own fire!'—in the morning the wood was found consumed, but the fire unextinguished. Nor, indeed, (saith Gi-

To what extent Christianity had spread, in Ireland, before the mission of St. Patrick, there are no very accurate means of judging. The boast of Tertullian, that, in his time, a knowledge of the Christian faith had reached those parts of the British isles yet unapproached by the Romans, is supposed to imply as well Ireland as the northern regions of Britain * ; nor are there wanting writers, who, placing reliance on the assertion of Eusebius, that some of the apostles preached the Gospel in the British isles, suppose St. James the elder to have been the promulgator of the faith among the Irish †,— just as St. Paul, on the same hypothesis, is said to have communicated it to the Britons.

But though unfurnished with any direct evidence as to the religious state of the Irish in their own country, we have a proof how early they began to distinguish themselves, on the continent, as Christian scholars and writers, in the persons of Pelagius, the eminent heresiarch, and his able disciple Celestius. That the latter was a Scot, or native of Ireland, is almost universally admitted ; but of Pelagius it is, in general, asserted that he was a Briton, and a monk of Bangor in Wales. There appears little doubt, however, that this statement is erroneous, and that the monastery to which he belonged was that of Bangor, or rather Banchor, near Carrickfergus. Two of the most learned, indeed, of all the writers respecting the heresy

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raldus) hath it ever been extinguished during so many ages since that virgin's time ; nor, with such piles of fuel as have been there consumed, did it ever leave ashes. The fire was surrounded by a fence, of form circular, like Vesta's temple. ' Virgeo orbiculari sepe,' which no male creature could enter and escape divine vengeance. An archer of the household of count Richard jumped over St. Bridget's fence, and went mad, and he would blow in the face of whoever he met, saying, ' Thus did I blow St. Bridget's fire.' Another man put his leg through a gap in the fence, and it was withered up."—Vol. ii.

* Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo verò subdita.—*Lib. adv. Judæos*, cap. 7.

† See the authorities collected on this point by Usher, Eccles. Primord. chap. i. xvi. Vincent de Beauvais thus asserts it :—Nutu Dei Jacobus Hiberniæ oris appulsus verbum Dei prædicavit intrepidus, ubi septem discipulos eligisse fertur."—*Speculum Historiale*, lib. viii. c. 7. It has been well conjectured by Usher, that this story has arisen from a confusion of Hibernia with Hiberia ; the latter being one of the names of Spain, which country St. James is said to have visited.

which bears his name, admit Pelagius no less than his disciple, to have been a native of Ireland.*

By few of the early Christian heresiarchs was so deep an impression made on their own times, or such abundant fuel for controversy bequeathed to the future, as by this remarkable man, Pelagius, whose opinions had armed against him all the most powerful theologians of his day, and who yet extorted, even from his adversaries, the praise of integrity and talent. The very bitterness with which St. Jerome attacks him, but shows how deeply he felt his power †; while the eulogies so honourably bestowed upon him by his great opponent, St. Augustine, will always be referred to by the lovers of tolerance, as a rare instance of that spirit of fairness and liberality by which the warfare of religious controversy may be softened.‡

The rank of Celestius, in public repute, though subordinate, of course, to that of his master, was not, in its way, less distinguished. So high was the popular estimate of his talents, that most of the writings circulated under the name of Pelagius, were supposed to have been in reality the production of his disciple's pen. We are told by St. Augustine, indeed, that many of the followers of the heresy chose to style themselves, after the latter, Celestians; and St. Jerome, in one of his paroxysms of vituperation, goes so far as to call him "the leader of the whole Pelagian army."§

While yet a youth, and before he had adopted the Pelagian doctrines, Celestius had passed some time in a

* Garnier, in his Dissert. upon Pelagianism; and Vossius, in his Histor. Pelag. The latter says, "Pelagius professione monachus, natione non Gallus Brito, ut Danæus putavit; nec Anglo-Britannus, ut scripsit Balæus, sed Scotus."—Lib. i. cap. 3.

† Among other reflections on the country of Pelagius, St. Jerome throws in his teeth the Irish flummery:—"Nec recordatur stolidissimus et Scotorum pultibus prægravatus."—In *Hierem. Præfat.* lib. i. Upon this Vossius remarks: "Nam per *Scotorum pultibus prægravatum*, non alium intelligit quam Pelagium natione Scotum."—Lib. i. cap. 3.

‡ The following are a few of the passages in which this praise, so creditable to both parties, is conveyed:—"Pelagii, viri, ut audio, sancti et non parvo profectu Christiani."—*De Peccat. meritis ac remiss.* lib. iii. cap. 1. "Eum qui noverunt loquuntur bonum ac prædicandum virum."—*Ib.* cap. 3.; and again, "Vir ille tam egregiè Christianus."

§ "Pelagii licet discipulum tamen magistrum et ductorem exercitûs." *Epist. ad Ctesiphont.*

monastery on the continent, supposed to have been that of St. Martin of Tours, and from thence (A.D. 369) addressed to his parents, in Ireland, three letters, "in the form, as we are told, of little books," and full of such piety, "as to make them necessary to all who love God." Among his extant works there is mentioned an epistle "On the Knowledge of Divine Law;" which, by some, is conjectured to have been one of those letters addressed by him to his parents.* But Vossius has shown, from internal evidence, that this could not have been the case; the epistle in question being, as he says, manifestly tinged with Pelagianism †, and therefore to be referred to a later date. The fact of Celestius thus sending letters to Ireland, with an implied persuasion, of course, that they would be read, affords one of those incidental proofs of the art of writing being then known to the Irish, which, combining with other evidence more direct, can leave but little doubt upon the subject. A country that could produce, indeed, before the middle of the fourth century, two such able and distinguished men as Pelagius and Celestius, could hardly have been a novice, at that time, in civilisation, however secluded from the rest of Europe she had hitherto remained.

From some phrases of St. Jerome, in one of his abusive attacks on Pelagius, importing that the heresy professed by the latter was common to others of his countrymen, it has been fairly concluded that the opinions in question were not confined to these two Irishmen; but, on the contrary, had even spread to some extent among that people. It is, indeed, probable, that whatever Christians Ireland could boast at this period, were mostly followers of the peculiar tenets of

* "Cælestius antequam dogma Pelagianum incurreret, imò adhuc adolescens scripsit ad parentes suos de monasterio epistolas in modum libellorum tres, omni Deum desideranti necessarias."—*Gennadius, Catal. Illust. Vir.* By Dr. O'Connor, this passage of Gennadius has been rather unaccountably brought forward, in proof of the early introduction of monastic institutions into Ireland. "Monachorum instituta toto fere sæculo ante S. Patricii adventum, invecta fuisse in Hiberniam patet ex supra allatis de Cælestio, qui ab ipsa adolescentia monasterio se dicavit, ut scribit Gennadius." But the mere fact of the Irishman Celestius having been in a monastery on the continent, is assuredly no proof of the introduction of monastic establishments into Ireland.—See *Prol.* i. lxxviii.

† Manifestè Πελαγιανίζει.

their two celebrated countrymen; and the fact that Pelagianism had, at some early period, found its way into this country, is proved by a letter from the Roman clergy to those of Ireland, in the year 640, wherein, adverting to some indications of a growth of heresy, at that time, they pronounce it to be a revival of the old Pelagian virus.*

Already in Britain, where, at the period of which we are treating, Christianity had, for more than a century, flourished †, the tenets of Pelagius had been rapidly gaining ground; and the mission of St. German and Lupus to that country, in the year 429, was for the express purpose of freeing it from the infection of this heresy. Among the persons who accompanied this mission, was the future apostle of Ireland, Patrick, then in his forty-second year. While thus occupied, the attention of these missionaries would naturally be turned to the state of Christianity in Ireland; and it was, doubtless, the accounts which they gave of the increasing number of Christians, in that country, as well as of the inroads already made upon them by the Pelagian doctrines, that induced pope Celestine to turn his attention to the wants of the Irish, and to appoint a bishop for the superintendence of their infant church. The person chosen for this mission "to the Scots believing in Christ" (for so it is specified by the chronicler) ‡ was Palladius, a deacon of the Roman church, at whose instance St. German had been sent by the pope to reclaim the erring Britons; and, whatever preachers of the faith, foreign or native, might have appeared previously in Ireland, it seems certain that, before this period, no hierarchy had been there instituted, but that in Palladius the Irish Christians saw their first bishop.

* Et hoc quoque cognovimus, quod virus Pelagianæ hæreseos apud vos denuo reviviscit.

† British bishops had already been present at some continental councils: at that of Arles, in A. D. 314; and at the council of Nice, as is shown to be probable (Antiq. of Churches, chap. ii.), in the year 325.

‡ "Ad Scotos in Christum credentes ordinatus a Papa Celestino Palladius primus Episcopus mittitur."—*Prosper. Chron. Bass. et Antioch. Coss.*

For a short period, success appears to have attended his mission; and a zealous anti-Pelagian of that day, in his haste to laud the spiritual triumphs of the pope, prematurely announced that the new missionary to the British isles, "while endeavouring to keep Britain Catholic, had made Ireland Christian." * The result, however, as regards the latter country, was by no means so prosperous. The few believers Palladius found or succeeded in making during his short stay, could ill protect him against the violence of the numbers who opposed him; and, after some unavailing efforts to obtain a hearing for his doctrine, he was forced to fly from the country, leaving behind him no other memorial of his labours than the adage traditional among the Irish, that "not to Palladius but to Patrick did God grant the conversion of Ireland." This ill-fated missionary did not live to report his failure at Rome; but being driven by a storm on the coast of North Britain, there died, it is said, at Fordun, in the district of Mearns.

Before entering on an account of St. Patrick's mission, a brief sketch of his life, previous to that period, may be deemed requisite. It will be seen that with him, as perhaps with most men who have achieved extraordinary actions, a train of preparation appears to have been laid, from the very outset, for the mighty work he was to accomplish. Respecting his birth-place, there has been much difference of opinion; the prevailing notion being that he was born at Alcluit, now Dumbarton, in North Britain.† It is only, however, by a very forced and false construction of some of the evidence on the subject, that any part of Great Britain can be assigned as the birth-place of the Saint; and his own Confession, a

* Et ordinato Scotis episcopo, dum Romanam insulam studet servare Catholicam, fecit etiam Barbaram Christianam. — *Prosper. Lib. contra Collat.* cap. 41. This sanguine announcement was issued by Prosper, in a work directed against the semi-Pelagians, when the true result of Palladius's mission had not yet reached him. With respect to the epithet "barbara," here applied to Ireland, it is well known that whatever country did not form a part of the Roman empire, was, from ancient custom, so styled.

† Dr. O'Connor, who was of this opinion, takes also for granted that, as a native of Alcluid, or Dunbarton, St. Patrick might have been claimed as Scoto-Irish; Alcluid having been, as he asserts, the seat of the Irish kings

work of acknowledged genuineness, proves him to have been a native of the old Gallican, or rather Armoric Britain.* The country anciently known by this name comprised the whole of the north-west coasts of Gaul; and in the territory now called Boulogne St. Patrick, it appears, was born. That it was on the Armorican coast he had been made captive, in his boyhood, all the writers of his life agree; and as it is allowed also by the same authorities that his family was resident there at the time, there arose a difficulty as to the cause of their migration thither from the banks of the Clyde, which the fact, apparent from his own statement, that Armorica was actually the place of his nativity, disposes of satisfactorily. His family was, as he informs us, respectable, his father having held the office of Decurio, or municipal senator; though, as it appears, he afterwards entered into holy orders, and was a deacon. From a passage in the Letter of the Saint to Coroticus, it is supposed, and not improbably, that his family may have been of Roman origin; and the opinion that his mother, Conchessa, was a native of some part of the Gauls, is concurred in by all the old Irish writers.

The year of his birth has been likewise a subject of much variance and controversy; but the calculations most to be relied upon assign it to A. D. 387, which, according to his own statement of his having been, at the time when he was made captive, sixteen years of age, brings this latter event to the year 403, a period memorable in Irish history, when the monarch Nial of the Nine Host-

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in Albany. Alcluid, Rupes Cluidensis, hodie Dunbarton, quæ fuit regia arx regum Hibernorum Albaniæ." He adds, "Natus est itaque S. Patricius inter Hibernos in præcipuo Hibernorum propugnaculo in Albania." Prol. i. xcviii. This surely, however, is incorrect. The city in question, —the Rock of Clyde, as it was called,— remained in the hands of the Britons so late as the days of Bede (l. i. c. 12.); and it was, therefore, not for many centuries after the time of St. Patrick that it was taken possession of by the Scots.

* Patrem habui Calpornium diaconum, filium quondam Potiti presbyteri, qui fuit in vico *Bonavem Taberniæ*: villulam Enon prope habuit, ubi capturam dedi.—*Confess.* Doctor Lanigan has shown clearly that the place here mentioned, Bonavem, or Bonaven Taberniæ, was in Armoric Gaul, being the same town as Boulogne-sur-Mer in Picardy.—See Eccles. Hist. chap. 3.

ages, after laying waste the coasts of Great Britain, extended his ravages to the maritime districts of Gaul.

A. D. 403. On being carried by his captors to Ireland, the young Patrick was purchased, as a slave, by a man named Milcho, who lived in that part of Dalaradia which is now comprised within the county of Antrim. The occupation assigned to him was the tending of sheep ; and his lonely rambles over the mountain and in the forest are described by himself as having been devoted to constant prayer and thought, and to the nursing of those deep devotional feelings which, even at that time, he felt strongly stirring within him. The mountain alluded to by him, as the scene of these meditations, is supposed to have been Sliebhmis, as it is now called, in Antrim. At length, after six years of servitude, the desire of escaping from bondage arose in his heart; a voice in his dreams, he says, told him that he "was soon to go to his own country," and that a ship was ready to convey him. Accordingly, in the seventh year of his slavery, he betook himself to flight, and, making his way to the south-western coast of Ireland, was there received, with some reluctance, on board a merchant vessel, which, after a voyage of three days, landed him on the coast of Gaul.*

A. D. 409 to 410. After indulging, for a time, in the society of his parents and friends, being naturally desirous of retrieving the loss of those years during which he had been left without instruction, he repaired to the celebrated monastery or college of St. Martin †, near Tours, where he remained four years, and was, it is believed, initiated there in the ecclesiastical state. That his mind dwelt much on recollections of Ireland, may be concluded from a dream which he represents himself to have had about this time, in which a messenger appeared to him, coming as if from Ireland, and bearing innumerable letters, on one of which

* It is said in some of the lives of St. Patrick, that there was a law in Ireland according to which slaves should become free in the seventh year, and that it was under this law he gained his liberty. The same writers add, that this was conformable to the practice of the Hebrews — more Hebræorum. (Levit. xxv. 40.) See on this point, Dr. Lanigan, chap. iv. note 43.

† The monastic institution, says Mabillon, was introduced "in Hiberniam insulam per S. Patricium, S. Martini discipulum."

were written these words, "The Voice of the Irish." At the same moment, he fancied that he could hear the voices of persons from the wood of Foclat, near the Western Sea, crying out, as if with one voice, "We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk still among us." —"I was greatly affected in my heart," adds the Saint, in describing this dream, "and could read no further; I then awoke."* In these natural workings of a warm and pious imagination, described by himself thus simply, — so unlike the prodigies and miracles with which most of the legends of his life abound, — we see what a hold the remembrance of Ireland had taken of his youthful fancy, and how fondly he already contemplated some holy work in her service.

At the time when this vision occurred, St. Patrick was about thirty years old, and it was shortly after, we are told, that he placed himself under the spiritual direction of St. German of Auxerre, a man of distinguished reputation, in those times, both as a civilian and an ecclesiastic. From this period, there is no very accurate account of the Saint's studies or transactions, till, in the year 429, we find him accompanying St. German and Lupus, in their expedition to Britain, for the purpose of eradicating from that country the growing errors of Pelagianism. Nine years of this interval he is said to have passed in an island, or islands, of the Tuscan Sea; and the conjecture that Lérins was the place of his retreat seems, notwithstanding the slight geographical difficulty, by no means improbable. There had been recently a monastery established in that island, which became afterwards celebrated for the number of holy and learned persons whom it had produced; nor could the destined apostle have chosen for himself a retreat

* The following is the Saint's description of this dream in his own homely Latin: — "Et ibi scilicet vidi in visu, nocte, virum venientem quasi de Hiberione, cui nomen Victoricius, cum epistulis innumerabilibus, et dedit mihi unam ex illis, et legi principium epistulæ continentem Vox Hiberionacum. Et dum recitabam principium epistolæ putabam ipso momento audire vocem ipsorum qui erant juxta sylvam Focluti, quæ est prope mare occidentale. Et sic exclamaverunt quasi ex uno ore, Rogamus te, sancte puer, ut venias, et adhuc ambules inter nos. Et valde compunctus sum corde, et amplius non potui legere: et sic expergefactus sum."

more calculated to nurse the solemn enthusiasm which such a mission required than among the pious and contemplative Solitaries of the small isle of Lérins.

The attention of Rome being at this time directed to the state of Christianity among the Irish,—most probably by the reports on that subject received from the British missionaries, — it was resolved by Celestine to send a bishop to that country, and Palladius was, as we have seen, the person appointed. The peculiar circumstances which fitted St. Patrick to take part in such a mission, and probably his own expressed wishes to that effect, induced St. German to send him to Rome with recommendations to the Holy Father. But, before his arrival, Palladius had departed for Ireland, and the hopeless result of his mission has already been related. Immediately on the death of this bishop two or three of his disciples set out to announce the event to his successor St. Patrick, who was then on his way through Gaul. Having had himself consecrated bishop at Eboria, a town in the north-west of that country, the Saint proceeded on his course to the scene of his labours; and, resting but a short time in Britain*, arrived in Ireland, as the Irish Annals inform us, in the first year of the pontificate of Sextus the Third.

A. D. 431.

A. D. 432. His first landing appears to have been on the shore of Dublin; or, as it is described, "the celebrated port of the territory of the Evoleni," by which is supposed to have been meant the "portus Eblanorum" of Ptolemy, the present harbour of Dublin. After meeting with a repulse, at this and some other places in Leinster, the Saint, anxious, we are told, to visit the haunts of his youth, to see his old master Milcho, and endeavour to convert him to the

* During one of St. Patrick's visits to Britain, he is supposed to have preached in Cornwall. "By persisting in their Druidism," says Borlase, "the Britons of Cornwall drew the attention of St. Patrick this way, who about the year 432, with 20 companions, halted a little on his way to Ireland, on the shores of Cornwall, where he is said to have built a monastery. Whether St. German was in Cornwall at this time, I cannot say; but, according to Usher, he was either in Cornwall or Wales, for St. Patrick is said, "ad præceptorem suum beatum Germanum divertisse, et apud Britannos in partibus Cornubiæ et Cambriæ aliquandiu substitisse." — *Borlase, Antiq.* book. iv. chap. x. sect. 2.

faith, steered his course for East Ulster, and arrived with his companions at a port near Strangford, in the district now called the barony of Lecale. Here, on landing and proceeding a short way up the country, they were met by a herdsman, in the service of the lord of the district, who, supposing them to be sea-robbers or pirates, hastened to alarm the whole household. In a moment, the master himself, whose name was Dicho, made his appearance, attended by a number of armed followers, and threatening destruction to the intruders. But, on seeing St. Patrick, so much struck was the rude chief with the calm sanctity of his aspect, that the uplifted weapon was suspended, and he at once invited the whole of the party to his dwelling. The impression which the looks of the Saint had made, his Christian eloquence but served to deepen and confirm; and not merely the pagan lord himself, but all his family became converts.

In an humble barn belonging to this chief, which was ever after called Sabhul Padruic, or Patrick's Barn, the Saint celebrated divine worship; and we shall find that this spot, consecrated by his first spiritual triumph, continued to the last his most favourite and most frequented retreat.

Desirous of visiting his former abode, and seeing that mountain where he had so often prayed in the time of his bondage, he set out for the residence of his master Milcho, which appears to have been situated in the valley of Arcuil, in that district of Dalaradia inhabited by the Cruthene, or Irish Picts. Whatever might have been his hope of effecting the conversion of his old master, he was doomed to meet with disappointment; as Milcho, fixed and inveterate in his heathenism, on hearing of the approach of his holy visiter, refused to receive or see him.

After remaining some time in Down, to which county he had returned from Dalaradia, St. Patrick prepared, on the approach of Easter, to risk the bold, and as it proved, politic step of celebrating that great Christian fes-

tival in the very neighbourhood of Tara, where the Princes and States of the whole kingdom were to be about that time assembled. Taking leave of his new friend Dicho, he set sail with his companions, and steering southwards arrived at the harbour, now called Colp, at the mouth of the Boyne. There leaving his boat, he proceeded with his party to the Plain of Breg, in which the ancient city of Tara was situated. In the course of his journey, a youth of family whom he baptised, and to whom, on account of the kindly qualities of his nature, he gave the name of Benignus, conceived such an affection for him as to insist on being the companion of his way. This enthusiastic youth became afterwards one of his most favourite disciples, and, on his death, succeeded him as bishop of Armagh.

On their arrival at Slane, the Saint and his companions pitched their tents for the night, and as it was the eve of the festival of Easter, lighted at night-fall the paschal fire.* It happened that, on the same evening, the monarch Leogaire and the assembled princes were, according to custom, celebrating the pagan festival of La Bealtinne †; and as it was a law that no fires should be lighted on that night, till the great pile in the palace of Tara was kindled, the paschal fire of St. Patrick, on being seen from the heights of Tara, before that of the monarch, excited the wonder of all assembled. To the angry inquiries of Leogaire, demanding who could have dared to violate thus the law, his Magi or Druids are said to have made answer,—"This fire, which has now been kindled before our eyes, unless extinguished this very night, will never be extinguished throughout all time. Moreover, it will tower above all the fires of our

* "According to the ancient, as well as the modern ecclesiastical liturgy, fire was to be struck and lighted up, with solemn prayers and ceremonies, on Easter Eve, which fire was to be kept burning in the church lamps till the eve of Good Friday in the ensuing year." — *Milner's Inquiry, &c.*

† "Anciently their times of repast were for the most part in the evening; from which custom that solemn feast at which Laogair, king of Ireland, entertained all the orders of the kingdom at Tarah, ann. 455, is in the Ulster annals called the Cœna Temræ, the Supper of Tarah; and it is remarkable that from this supper historians have fixed an era for the latter part of the times of that monarch's administration." — *Ware's Antiquities.*

ancient rites, and he who lights it will ere long scatter your kingdom." * Surprised and indignant, the monarch instantly despatched messengers to summon the offender to his presence; the princes seated themselves in a circle upon the grass to receive him; and, on his arrival, one alone among them, Herc, the son of Dego, impressed with reverence by the stranger's appearance, stood up to salute him.

That they heard, with complacency, however, his account of the objects of his mission, appears from his preaching at the palace of Tara, on the following day, in the presence of the king and the States-General, and maintaining an argument against the most learned of the Druids, in which the victory was on his side. It is recorded, that the only person who, upon this occasion, rose to welcome him was the arch-poet Dubtach, who became his convert on that very day, and devoted, thenceforth, his poetical talents to religious subjects alone.† The monarch himself, too, while listening to the words of the apostle, is said to have exclaimed to his surrounding nobles, "It is better that I should believe than die;" — and, appalled by the awful denouncements of the preacher, to have at once professed himself Christian.

There seems little doubt that the king Leogaire, with that spirit of tolerance which then pervaded all ranks, and so singularly smoothed the way to the reception of the Gospel in Ireland, gave full leave to the Saint to promulgate his new creed to the people, on condition of

* Hic ignis quem videmus, nisi extinctus fuerit hac nocte, non extinguetur in æternum: insuper et omnes ignes nostræ consuetudinis super excellet; et ille qui incendit illum, regnum tuum dissipabit.—*Probus, S. Patric. Vita*, lib. i. c. 35.

† Carmina quæ quondam peregit in laudem falsorum deorum jam in usum meliorem mutans et linguam, poemata clariora composuit in laudem Omnipotentis.—*Jocelin.*

Some writings under the name of this poet are to be found in the Irish collections. An elegant hymn of his (says Mr. O'Reilly) addressed to the Almighty is preserved in the Felire Aenguis, or account of the festivals of the church, written by Angus Ceile-De, in the latter end of the eighth century." There is also, in the Book of Rights, a very old poem attributed to him, in which he thus asserts the supremacy of his art: — "There is no right of visitation or headship (superiority) over the truly learned poet." — *Trans. Iberno-Celt. Society.*

his not infringing the laws or peace of the kingdom. But that either himself, or his queen, had enlisted among the converts, there appears strong reason to question. In adducing instances of the great success with which God had blessed his mission, the Saint makes mention of the sons and daughters of men of rank, who, he boasts, had embraced the faith; but, with respect to the conversion of the king or queen, he maintains a total silence. It has been, indeed, in the higher regions of society that, from the very commencement of Christianity, its light has always encountered the most resisting medium; and, it is plain, from the narrative of St. Patrick, that, while he found the people every where docile listeners, his success with the upper or dominant caste was comparatively slow and limited; nor does it appear that, so late as the time when he wrote his Confession, the greater part of the kings and princes were yet converted.

Among the females, however, even of this highest class, the lessons of peace and humility which he inculcated were always hailed with welcome; and he describes one noble young Scotic lady, whom he had baptised, as "blessed and most beautiful."* To the list of his royal female converts are to be added the sisters Ethnea and Fethlimia, daughters of the king Leogaire; whom he had the good fortune to meet with, in the course of a journey over the plain of Connaught, under circumstances full of what may be called the poesy of real life.

It was natural that the dream of "the Voice of the Irish," by which his imagination had many years before been haunted, should now, in the midst of events so exciting and gratifying, recur vividly to his mind; and we are told, accordingly †, that a wish to visit once more the scene of that vision, — to behold the wood, beside the Western Sea, from whence the voices appeared to come, — concurred with other more important objects to induce him to undertake this journey westwards. Rest-

* "Et etiam una benedicta Scotta, genitiva, nobilis, pulcherrima, adulta erat quam ego baptizavi." — *Confess.*

† Jocelin, cap. lv.

ing for the night, on his way, at a fountain in the neighbourhood of the royal residence, Cruachan, himself and his companions had begun, at day-break, to chaunt their morning service, when the two young princesses coming to the fountain, at this early hour, to bathe, were surprised by the appearance of a group of venerable persons all clothed in white garments and holding books in their hands. On their inquiring who the strangers were, and to what class of beings they belonged, whether celestial, aerial, or terrestrial, St. Patrick availed himself of the opportunity thus furnished of instructing them in the nature of the true God; and, while answering their simple and eager questions as to where the God he worshipped dwelt, whether in heaven or on the earth, on mountains or in valleys, in the sea or in rivers, contrived to explain to them the leading truths of the Christian religion. Delighted with his discourse, the royal sisters declared their willingness to conform to any course of life that would render them acceptable to such a God as he announced; and, being then baptised by the holy stranger, at the fountain, became in a short time after consecrated virgins of the church.*

The Saint had, previously to his leaving Meath, attended the celebration of the Taltine Games, and taken advantage of the vast multitudes there assembled to forward his mighty work of conversion. In the course of this journey, likewise, to Connaught, he turned aside a little from the direct road, to visit that frightful haunt of cruelty and superstition, the Plain of Slaughter, in the county of Leitrim, where, from time immemorial, had stood the Druidical idol Crom-cruach, called sometimes also Cean-Groith, or Head of the Sun. This image, to which, as to Moloch of old, young children were offered up in sacrifice, had been an object of worship, we are told, with every successive colony by which the island had been conquered. For St. Patrick, however, was reserved the glory of destroying both idol and worship; and a large church was now erected by him

* Lives of St. Patrick, Probus, Tripartite, &c.

in the place where these monstrous rites had been so long solemnised.*

His spiritual labours, in the West of Ireland, are all detailed with a fond minuteness by his biographers, and exhibit, with little exception, the very same flow of triumphant success which marked his progress from the beginning. Baptising multitudes wherever he went, providing churches for the congregations thus formed, and ordaining priests from among his disciples, to watch over them, — his only rest from these various cares was during a part of the Lent season, when retiring alone to the heights of Mount Eagle†, or, as it has been since called, the Mountain of St. Patrick, he there devoted himself, for a time, to fasting and solitary prayer. While thus occupied, the various seafowl and birds of prey that would naturally be attracted to the spot, by the sight of a living creature in so solitary a place‡, were transformed, by the fancy of the superstitious, into flocks of demons which came to tempt and disturb the holy man from his devotions. After this interval of seclusion, he proceeded northwards to the country then called Tir-amalgaidh, the modern barony of Tyrawley.

He was now in the neighbourhood of the wood of Foclut, near the Ocean, from whence the voices of the Irish had called to him in his dream; and, whether good fortune alone was concerned in effecting the accomplishment of the omen, or, as is most likely, the thought that

* "When we hear of churches erected by St. Patrick, very many of which were certainly of much later foundation, we are not to understand such edifices as are so called in our days, but humble buildings made of hurdles or wattles, clay and thatch, according to the ancient fashion of Ireland, and which could be put together in a very short time." — *Lanigan*, chap. v. note 74.

† *Cruachan-aichle*, since called *Cruach Phadruic* (Croagh Patrick, in Mayo), that is, the heap or mountain of St. Patrick.

‡ "Multitudo avium venit circa illum, ita ut non posset videre faciem cœli et terræ ac maris propter aves." — *Probus*, lib. ii. cap. 19.

"Jocelin is the only biographer of St. Patrick that has spoken of the expulsion by him of serpents and other venemous creatures from Ireland. From his book this story made its way into other tracts, and even into some breviaries. Had such a wonderful circumstance really occurred, it would have been recorded in our Annals and other works, long before Jocelin's time." *Lanigan, Ecclesiast. Hist.* chap. v. note 108. The learned Colgan, in exposing the weakness of this story, alleges, that in the most ancient documents of Irish history, there is not the least allusion to venomous animals having ever been found in this country.

he was specially appointed to this place gave fresh impulse to his zeal, the signal success which actually attended his mission in this district sufficiently justified any reliance he might have placed upon the dream. Arriving soon after the death of the king of that territory, and at the moment when his seven sons, having just terminated a dispute concerning the succession, were, together with a great multitude of people, collected on the occasion, St. Patrick repaired to the assembly, and, by his preaching, brought over to the faith of Christ not only the seven princes, including the new king, but also twelve thousand persons more, all of whom he soon after baptised. It is supposed that to these western regions of Ireland the Saint allúdes, in his Confession, where he stated that he had visited remote districts where no missionary had been before ;— an assertion important, as plainly implying that, in the more accessible parts of the country, Christianity had, before his time, been preached and practised.

From this period, through the remainder of his truly wonder-working career, the records of his transactions present but little variety ; his visits to Leinster, Ulster, and Munster being but repetitions of the course of success we have been contemplating,—a continuation of the same ardour, activity, and self-devotion on the part of the missionary himself, and the same intelligence, susceptibility, and teachableness on the part of most of his hearers.

Notwithstanding, however, the docile and devotional spirit which he found every where, among the lower classes, and the singular forbearance with which, among the highest, even the rejecters of his doctrine tolerated his preaching it, yet that his life was sometimes in danger appears from his own statements ; and an instance or two are mentioned by his biographers, where the peril must have been imminent.* On one of these

* In his Confession, the Saint makes mention of the sufferings of himself and his followers, and " of the precautions he took against giving occasion to a general persecution, using, among other means, that of making presents to the unconverted kings, some of whom, however, while

occasions he was indebted for his life to the generosity of his charioteer, Odran; who, hearing of the intention of a desperate chieftain, named Failge, to attack the Saint when on his way through the King's County, contrived, under the pretence of being fatigued, to induce his master to take the driver's seat, and so, being mistaken for St. Patrick, received the lance of the assassin in his stead.* The death of this charioteer is made more memorable by the remarkable circumstance, that he is the only martyr on record who, in the course of this peaceful crusade in Ireland, fell a victim by the hands of an Irishman. On another occasion, while visiting Lecale, the scene of his earliest labours, a design was formed against his life by the captain of a band of robbers, which he not only baffled by his intrepidity and presence of mind, but succeeded in converting the repentant bandit into a believer. Full of compunction, this man, whose name was Maccaldus, demanded of St. Patrick what form of penance he ought to undergo for his crimes; and the nature of the task which the Saint imposed upon him is highly characteristic of the enterprising cast of his own mind. The penitent was to depart from Ireland immediately; to trust himself, alone, to the waves, in a leathern boat, and taking with him nothing but a coarse garment, land on the first shore to which the wind might bear him, and there devote himself to the service of God. This command was obeyed; and it is added that, wafted by the wind to the Isle of Man, Maccaldus found there two holy bishops, by whom he was most kindly received, and who directed him in his penitential works with so much spiritual advantage, that he succeeded them in the bishopric of the island, and became renowned for his sanctity.

obstinate themselves, allowed their sons to follow him: — "Interim præmia," he says, "dabam regibus propter quod dabam mercedem filliis ipsorum qui mecum ambulant, et nihil comprehenderunt me cum comitibus meis."

* Among the specimens of Irish manuscripts, given by Astle, there is one from a tract relating to this event: — "This specimen," says the writer, "is taken from an ancient manuscript of two tracts, relating to the old municipal laws of Ireland. The first contains the trial of Enna, brother of Laogarius, chief king of Ireland, for the murder of Oraine (Odran) chariot-driver of St. Patrick, before Dumpthac (Dubtach), the king's chief bard, and the sentence passed thereon, about the year 430."

The most active foes St. Patrick had to encounter were to be found naturally among those Magi or Druids, who saw in the system he was introducing the downfall of their own religion and power. An attempt made against his life, shortly before his grand work of conversion in Tyrawley, is said to have originated among that priesthood, and to have been averted only by the interference of one of the convert princes. Among the civil class of the Literati, however, his holy cause found some devoted allies. It has been already seen that the arch-poet Dubtacth became very early a convert; and we find the Saint, in the course of a journey through Leinster, paying a visit to this bard's residence, in Hy-Kinsellagh, and consulting with him upon matters relating to the faith. The arch-poet's disciple, too, Fiech, was here admitted to holy orders by St. Patrick, and, becoming afterwards bishop of Sletty, left behind him a name as distinguished for piety as for learning.

The event, in consequence of which the Saint addressed his indignant letter to Coroticus, the only authentic writing, besides the Confession, we have from his hand, is supposed to have taken place during his stay on the Munster coast, about the year 450.* A British prince, named Coroticus, who, though professing to be a Christian, was not the less, as appears from his conduct, a pirate and persecutor, had landed with a party of armed followers, while St. Patrick was on the coast, and set about plundering a large district in which, on the very day before, the Saint had baptised and confirmed a vast number of converts.† Having murdered several of these persons, the pirates carried off a considerable number of captives, and then sold

* In the chronology of the events of St. Patrick's life, I have throughout followed Dr. Lanigan, than whom, in all respects, there cannot be a more industrious or trustworthy guide.

† "De sanguine innocentium Christianorum, quos ego innumeros Deo genui, atque in Christo confirmavi, postera die qua chrisma neophyti in veste candida flagrabat in fronte ipsorum." — *Confess.*

"We have here, in a few words," says Dr. Lanigan, "an exact description of the ancient discipline, according to which the sacrament of confirmation or chrism used to be administered immediately after baptism by the bishop, in case he were the baptiser or present on the occasion. We see also the white garment of the newly baptised."

them as slaves to the Picts and Scots, who were at that time engaged in their last joint excursion into Britain. A letter despatched by the Saint to the marauders, requesting them to restore the baptised captives, and part of the booty, having been treated by them with contumely, he found himself under the necessity of forthwith issuing the solemn epistle which has come down to us, in which, denouncing Coroticus and his followers as robbers and murderers, he, in his capacity of "Bishop established in Ireland," declares them to be excommunicated.

Having now preached through all the provinces, and filled the greater part of the island with Christians and with churches, St. Patrick saw that the fit period was now arrived for the consolidation of the extensive hierarchy he had thus constructed by the establishment of a metropolitical see. In selecting the district of Macha for the seat of the primacy, he was influenced, doubtless, by the associations connected with that place, as an ancient royal residence, — the celebrated Palace of Emania having stood formerly in the neighbourhood of the eminence upon which Ardmacha, or Armagh, afterwards rose. The time of the foundation of this see by St. Patrick has been variously stated; but the opinion ofthose who place it late in his career, besides being equally borne out by evidence, seems by far the most consonant with reason; as it is not probable that he would have set about establishing a metropolitical see for all Ireland, until he had visited the various provinces, ascertained the progress of the Gospel in each, and regulated accordingly their ecclesiastical concerns. It may be remarked, that Ware and other writers, who give to this see the designation of archiepiscopal, and style St. Patrick an archbishop, have been guilty of a slight anachronism; as it was not till the beginning of the eighth century that the title of archbishop was known in Ireland. It was, indeed, in all countries a term of rather late adoption,— St. Athanasius being, I rather think, the first writer in whose works it is found.

The see of Armagh being now established, and the great bulk of the nation won over to the faith, St. Patrick, resting in the midst of the spiritual creation he had called up round him, passed the remainder of his days between Armagh and his favourite retreat, at Sabhul, in the barony of Lecale, — that spot which had witnessed the first dawn of his apostolical career, and now shared in the calm glories which surrounded its setting. Among the many obvious fables with which even the best of the ancient records of his life abound, is to be reckoned the account of his journey to Rome, after the foundation of Armagh, with the view of obtaining, as is alleged, from the pope, a confirmation of its metropolitical privileges, and also of procuring a supply of relics. This story, invented, it is plain, to dignify and lend a lustre to some relics shown in later times at Armagh, is wholly at variance with the Saint's written testimony, which proves him constantly to have remained in Ireland, from the time when he commenced his mission in the barony of Lecale, to the last day of his life. In the document here referred to, which was written after the foundation of Armagh, he declares expressly that the Lord "had commanded him to come among the Irish, and to stay with them for the remainder of his life."

Among the last proceedings recorded of him, he is said to have held some synods at Armagh, in which canons were decreed, and ecclesiastical matters regulated. Of the canons attributed to these early Synods, there are some pronounced to be of a much later date, while of others the authenticity has been, by high and critical authority, admitted.*

The impression that his death was not far distant, appears to have been strong on the Saint's mind when

* Several of these canons appear to have been drawn up at a time when Paganism was not yet extinct in Ireland. Thus, among the canons of the synod of Patrick, Auxilius, and Esserninus, the eighth begins thus,— "Clericus si pro *gentili* homine fidejussor fuerit." In the thirteenth it is said,—"Eleemosynam a *Gentibus* in Ecclesiam recipi non licet;" and in the fourteenth, "Christianus qui .... more *Gentilium* ad aruspicem mea-verit."

he wrote his Confession, the chief object of which was, to inform his relatives, and others in foreign nations, of the redeeming change which God, through his ministry, had worked in the minds of the Irish. With this view it was that he wrote his parting communication in Latin, though fully aware, as he himself acknowledges, how rude and imperfect was his mode of expressing himself in that tongue, from the constant habit he had been in, for so many years, of speaking no language but Irish.

A. D. 465. In his retreat at Sabhul, the venerable Saint was seized with his last illness. Perceiving that death was near at hand, and wishing that Armagh, as the seat of his own peculiar see, should be the resting-place of his remains, he set out to reach that spot; but feeling, on his way, some inward warnings, which the fancy of tradition has converted into the voice of an Angel, commanding him to return to Sabhul, as the place appointed for his last hour, he went back to that retreat, and there, about a week after, died, on the 17th of March, A. D. 465, having then reached, according to the most consistent hypothesis on the subject, his seventy-eighth year. No sooner had the news spread throughout Ireland that the great apostle was no more, than the clergy flocked from all quarters to Sabhul, to assist in solemnising his obsequies; and as every bishop, or priest, according as he arrived, felt naturally anxious to join in honouring the dead by the celebration of the holy mysteries, the rites were continued without interruption through day and night. To psalmody and the chanting of hymns the hours of the night were all devoted; and so great was the pomp, and the profusion of torches kept constantly burning, that, as those who describe the scene express it, darkness was dispelled, and the whole time appeared to be one constant day.

In the choice of a successor to the see there could be no delay nor difficulty, as the eyes of the Saint himself, and of all who were interested in the appointment, had long been fixed on his disciple Benignus, as the person

destined to succeed him. It was remembered that he had, in speaking of this disciple when but a boy, said, in the language rather of prophecy than of appointment, "He will be the heir of my power." Some writers even assert, that the see was resigned by him to Benignus soon after the foundation of Armagh. But there appear little grounds for this assertion, and, according to the most consistent accounts, Benignus did not become bishop of Armagh till after St. Patrick's death.

Besides the natives of Ireland contemporary with our saint, of whom, in this sketch of his life, some notice has been taken, there were also other distinguished Irishmen, of the same period, whom it would not be right to pass over in silence. Among the names, next to that of the apostle himself, illustrious, are those of Ailbe, "another Patrick," as he was fondly styled, the pious Declan, and Ibar; all disciples of St. Patrick, and all memorable, as primitive fathers of the Irish church. To Secundinus, the first bishop*, as it is said, who died in Ireland (A. D. 448), is attributed a Latin poem or hymn in honour of St. Patrick, in which the Saint is mentioned as still alive, and of whose authenticity some able critics have seen no reason whatever to doubt.† There is also another hymn, upon the same subject, in the Irish language, said to have been written by Fiech, the disciple of the poet Dubdacht, but which, though very ancient, is evidently the production of a somewhat later period.

While these pious persons were, in ways much more effective than by the composition of such dry, metrical legends, advancing the Christian cause in Ireland, a far loftier flight of sacred song was, at the same time, ad-

* This bishop was sent, in the year 439, together with two others, to aid St. Patrick in his mission; as we find thus recorded in the Annals of Inisfallen: — "Secundinus et Auxiliarius (Auxilius), et Esserninus mittuntur in auxilium Patricii, nec tamen tenuerunt apostolatum, nisi Patricius solus."

† "I find no reason," says Dr. Lanigan, "for not considering it a genuine work of Secundinus."

The strophes of this hymn, consisting each of four lines, begin with the letters of the alphabet; the first strophe commencing, "Audite omnes amantes Deum;" and the last, "Zona Domini præcinctus."

ventured by an Irish writer abroad, the poet Shiel, or (as his name is Latinised) Sedulius*, who flourished in this century†, and, among other writings of acknowledged merit, was the author of a spirited Iambic poem upon the life of Christ, from which the Catholic church has selected some of her most beautiful hymns.‡

* There has been some controversy respecting our claims to this poet, who, it is alleged, has been confounded with another writer, of the same name, in the ninth century, universally admitted to have been an Irishman. The reader will find the question sifted, with his usual industry, by Bayle (art. Sedulius). Among the numerous authorities cited by Usher, in favour of our claim to this poet, the title prefixed to a work generally attributed to him (Annotations on Paul's Epistles), would seem decisive of the question:—"Sedulii Scoti Hyberniensis in omnes Epistolas Pauli Collectaneum." The name, Sedulius, too, written in Irish Siedhuil, and said to be the same as Shiel, is one peculiar, we are told, to Ireland, no instance of its use being found in any other country. By English scholars it will, I fear, be thought another strong Irish characteristic of this poet, that he sometimes erred in prosody. "Dictio Sedulii," says Borrichius, "facilis, ingeniosa, numerosa, perspicua, sic satis munda — si excipias prosodica quædam delicta." — *Dissertat. de Poet.*

In praising the Paschale Opus of Sedulius, pope Gelasius had described it as written "heroicis versibus;" but, by an unlucky clerical error, the word "hereticis" was, in the course of time, substituted for "heroicis," which brought our Irish poet into much disgrace at Rome, and led some canonists, it is said, to the wise decision, "*Omnia* poemata esse heretica."

† Not content with the honour of contributing, thus early, so great an ornament to foreign literature, some of our writers have represented Sedulius as producing his poems in Ireland; and referred to his classical knowledge as evidence of the state of literature in that country. Thus O'Halloran:—"That poetry was passionately cultivated in our schools, and classical poetry too, I have but to refer to the writings of the famous Sedulius." — Vol. iii. chap. 7. Even Mr. D'Alton has allowed himself to be tempted by his zeal for Ireland into an encouragement of the same delusion. "The treasures of Roman lore," he says, "were profitably spread over the country: the writings of Sedulius testify that classic poetry was cultivated at a very early period in Ireland."

‡ The Paschale Opus of Sedulius is in heroic metre, and extended through five books. His Iambic Hymn, which has been unaccountably omitted by Usher, in his Sylloge, commences thus, —

"A solis ortus cardine,
Ad usque terræ limitem."

CHAP. XI.

STATE OF THE SCOTS IN BRITAIN. — PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY.

It has been seen, from the letter of St. Patrick to Coroticus, that, so late as the middle of the fifth century, the incursions of the Picts and Scots into the territories of the Britons had not yet been discontinued. About the commencement of the same century Britain had ceased to form a portion of the Roman empire; the separation, according to some opinions, having been voluntary on the part of Britain *, while far more obviously it is to be accounted for by the enfeebled state of the Roman power, which rendered the occupation of so remote a province no longer practicable. How little prepared were the Britons themselves for independence, at this period, appears from the helplessness of their struggle against the aggressions of their neighbours, and the piteous entreaties for aid so often addressed by them to Rome; while the prompt attention, as far as the resources of the sinking empire would admit, which these appeals generally received, proves the reluctance with which the connection was then severed to have been mutual. A. D. 409.

In consequence of their urgent solicitations to Honorius, that emperor despatched to the aid of the Britons a single legion, which, for a time, suspended the attacks of their invaders; but no sooner was this legion withdrawn for the protection of Gaul, than again the Scots and Picts, breaking through the now unregarded wall of Severus, or else sailing around the ends, carried their ravages into the very heart of Britain. Once

* Dr. Lingard has followed Gibbon in asserting, on no other authority than a few words of Zosimus, that the Britons at this time voluntarily threw off their allegiance. But the force of evidence, as well as of probability, is all opposed to such a supposition.

more, the interference of the Romans succeeded in turning aside this scourge. Ambassadors, sent from the suffering province to Valentinian, and appearing before him, as is said, with their garments rent, and sand strewed over their heads*, so far excited the emperor's pity, that a last effort was made for them, and a force, under the command of Gallio of Ravenna, despatched seasonably to their relief. As in all the preceding cases, however, the interposition was but temporary. The Roman general, summoned away, with the whole of his force, to repress rebellion in Africa, announced to the Britons that they must thenceforward look to their own defence; and, from that period, the imperial protection was entirely withdrawn from the island. No sooner had the Romans taken their departure than the work of rapine recommenced; and, as the historian of these Devastations expresses it, "foul droves of Picts and Scots emerged from out their currachs, just as, when the sun is at his burning height, dark battalions of reptiles are seen to crawl from out their earth-holes." † Both in this writer and in Bede we find the most frightful representations of the state of misery to which the Britons were now reduced by the "anniversary" visitations of their spoilers.‡

A. D. 426. From the period of Gallio's command, during which was erected, between the Solway and Tyne, the last and most important of all the Roman walls, we hear no more of the sufferings of the Britons till the time when St. Patrick addressed his letter to Coroticus, and when that last great irruption of the Picts and Scots took place, which drove the Britons at length, in their despair, to invoke the perilous protection of the Saxons. It was in

* "Itemque mittuntur queruli Legati, scissis, ut dicitur, vestibus, opertisque sablone capitibus, impetrantes a Romanis auxilia," &c. — *Gildas.*

† "Itaque illis ad sua revertentibus, emergunt certatim de Curicis quibus sunt trans Scythicam vallem vecti, quasi in alto Titane, incalescentesque caumate, de arctissimis foraminum cavernulis, fusci vermiculorum cunei, tetri Scotorum Pictorumque greges," &c.— *Gildas.*

For the purpose of representing his countrymen, in ancient times, as Troglodytes, the reverend antiquary, Ledwich, has not hesitated to separate the simile in this passage from the context, and to produce it as evidence that the Irish at that time lived in earth-holes.

‡ Quia anniversarias avide prædas, nullo obsistente, trans maria exaggerabant. — *Gildas*, c. 14.

the extremity to which they had then found themselves reduced that, looking again to the Romans, they addressed to Ætius, the popular captain of the day, that memorable letter inscribed "The Groans of the Britons." But the standard of Attila was then advancing towards Gaul, and all the force of the empire was summoned to oppose his progress. Rome, prodigal so long of her strength to others, now trembled for her own safety; and the ravagers of Britain were, accordingly, left to enjoy their prey undisturbed.

By the arrival of the Saxons the balance of fortune was soon turned the other way; and the Scots and Picts became, in their turn, the vanquished. To the unhappy Britons, however, this success brought but a change of evils; as their treacherous allies, having first helped them to expel the Scots and Picts, then made use of the latter, as auxiliaries, to crush and subjugate the Britons. In all these transactions it is to be remembered, that under the general name of Scots are comprehended not merely the descendants of the Irish colony, long settled in North Britain, but also the native Scots of Ireland themselves, who were equally concerned in most of these expeditions; and who, however contemptuously, as we have seen, Gildas has affected to speak of their currachs, had already fitted out two naval armaments sufficiently notorious to be commemorated by the great poet of Rome's latter days. The share taken by the Irish, in these irruptions into Britain, is noticed frequently both by Gildas and Bede: — "They emerge eagerly," says the former, "from their currachs, in which they have been wafted across the Scythic Valley," — the name anciently given to the sea between Britain and Ireland. "The impudent Irish plunderers," says Bede, "return to their homes, only to come back again shortly."*

Of the three great "Devastations" of Britain, recorded by the former of these writers, two had occurred

* Revertuntur ergo impudentes grassatores Hiberni domus, post non longum tempus reversuri.

in the reign of the monarch Leogaire, who ruled over Ireland at the time of St. Patrick's mission. How far this prince was concerned in originating, or taking a personal share in any of these expeditions, does not appear from the records of his long reign ; and, among the domestic transactions in which he was engaged, his war upon the Lagenians, or people of Leinster, to enforce the payment of the odious Boromean tribute, seems alone to be worthy of any notice. Defeated by the troops of this province in a sanguinary action, which was called, from the place where it occurred, the Battle of the Ford of the Oaks, Leogaire was himself made prisoner, and regained his freedom only on consenting to swear, by the Sun and the Wind, that he never would again lay claim to the payment of the tribute. This solemn oath, however, the rapacious monarch did not hesitate to infringe,— his courtly Druids having conveniently absolved him from the obligation ; and, on his death occurring a short time after, it was said that, to punish his false appeal to their divinities, the Sun and the Wind had destroyed him.* This Pagan oath, and his continued commerce with the Druids, to the very year before he died, shows that Leogaire had either at no time become a Christian, or else had relapsed into Paganism. †

The fervid eagerness and rapidity with which the new faith had been embraced wore so much the appearance of that sort of enthusiasm which mere novelty often excites, that it would have seemed but in the natural course of affairs had there succeeded a lull to all this excitement, and had such a burst of religious zeal, throughout the great mass of the people,— deprived entirely, as it was,

* Thus recorded in the annals of the Four Masters: — " A. D. 457, anno 29. regni Laogarii filii Nialli Prælium Vadi Quercuum gestum a Lagenien-sibus contra Laogarium filium Nialli. Captus est Laogarius in prælio isto, et juravit jusjurandum Solis et Venti, et Elementorum, Lageniensibus, non venturum se contra eos, durante vita, ob intentum istum.

" A. D. 458, postquam fuisset 30 annis in Regimine Hiberniæ Laogarius filius Nialli Novi-obsidum, occisus est prope Cassiam inter Erin et Albaniam (i. e. duos colles qui sunt in regione Faolan), et Sol et Ventus occiderunt eum quia temeravit eos."

† The Tripartite Life of St. Patrick states that Leogaire was not a sincere believer, and that he was accustomed to say his father Nial had laid an injunction on him never to embrace the Christian faith, but to adhere to the gods of his ancestors. See Lanigan, chap. 5. note 53.

of the fuel which persecution always ministers,—subsided speedily into that state of languor, if not of dangerous indifference, in which the uncontested triumph of human desires almost invariably ends. But in this, as in all other respects, the course of the change now worked in the minds of the people of Ireland was peculiar and unprecedented; and, striking as was their zeal and promptitude in adopting the new faith, the steady fervour with which they now devoted themselves to its doctrines and discipline was even still more remarkable. From this period, indeed, the drama of Irish history begins to assume an entirely different character. Instead of the furious strife of kings and chieftains forming, as before, its main action and interest, this stormy spectacle gives way to the pure and peaceful triumphs of religion. Illustrious saints, of both sexes, pass in review before our eyes;—the cowl and the veil eclipse the glory even of the regal crown; and, instead of the grand and festive halls of Tara and Emania, the lonely cell of the fasting penitent becomes the scene of fame.

It is to be recollected, however, that, through all this picture, the hands of ecclesiastics have chiefly guided the pencil; and, though there can be no doubt that the change effected in the minds and hearts of the people, was, to a great extent, as real as it is wonderful, it was yet by no means either so deep or so general as on the face of these monkish annals it appears. While this peaceful pageant of saints and apostles so prominently occupies the foreground, frequent glimpses of scenes of blood are caught dimly in the distance, and the constant appeal to the sword, and the frequent falling of kings suddenly from their thrones, prove the ancient political habits of the people to have experienced but little change. In the page of the annalist, however, all this is kept subordinate or thrown into the shade; and while, for two or three centuries after the introduction of Christianity, the history of the Kings of Ireland presents but a meagre list of names, the acts of her missionaries and her saints, and the pious labours of her scholars, afford materials

for detail as abundant and minute as they are, in many instances, it must be owned, sterile and uninteresting.

A. D. The only event of high political importance, which occurs through the whole of this period, took place at the commencement of the sixth century, not long after the death of St. Patrick; and this was the establishment, under the sons of Erck, of that Scotic or Irish monarchy in North Britain, which not only extended its sway, in the course of a few centuries, over the whole of the modern Scotland, but transmitted, through the race of the Stuarts, a long succession of monarchs to Great Britain. The colony planted in those regions, by Carbre Rieda, in the middle of the third century, though constantly fed with supplies from the parent stock, the Dalriadians of Antrim, had run frequent risks of extirpation from the superior power of their neighbours and rivals, the Picts. In the year 503, however, the Dalriadian princes of Ireland, aided by the then all powerful influence of the Hy-Nial family, were enabled to transplant a new colony into North Britain, which, extending the limits of the former settlement, set up for the first time a regal authority, and became, in less than a century, sufficiently powerful to shake off all dependence upon Ireland.* The territory possessed by these original Scots appears to have included, in addition to the Western Isles, the whole of the mountainous district now called Argyleshire; and from the time of the erection of this Irish sovereignty, North Britain continued, for some centuries, to be divided between two distinct monarchies, the Scotish and the Pictish; till, at length, in the reign of Keneth Macal-

* The facts of the history of this colony have been thus well summed up by Roy (Military Antiq.): —

"There is incontrovertible authority to join the Irish with the Picts in their martial exploits against the Romans, as well from the Latin, as from the ancient British and Saxon, writers. It is clear, not only from all the Scotch history we have of the times, but from Bede, from the most authentic writers for an age or two before and after him, and from the Roman writers, that Scotland, during the Roman domination in Britain, subsisted under two different monarchies, Irish and Pictish." I have given this passage as I find it cited by Dr. O'Connor, having searched in vain for it in the folio edition of Roy's work, 1793.

pine, after a long and fierce struggle, the people of the Picts were entirely vanquished, and the Scots left sole masters of the country.

The memorable migration of the sons of Erck is marked by the Irish annalists as having occurred twenty years after the great battle of Ocha, in which Olill Molt, the successor of Leogaire in the monarchy of Ireland, was slain. This battle itself, too, constituted an era in Irish history, as the race of the Nials, on whose side victory then declared, were, by the fortune of that day's combat, rendered masters of all Ireland. The law established in the reign of Tuathal confining the succession to his own family, and excluding the princes of the other lines from the monarchy, was now wholly set aside; and the Hy-Nials, taking possession of the supreme government, held it uninterruptedly through a course of more than five hundred years.

Of the two kings who succeeded Olill Molt, namely, Lugad and Murcertach, the reign of one extended to twenty-five years, and that of the other to twenty-one; and yet of the former reign all that we find recorded is the names of some battles which signalised its course; while of the grandson of Erck, nothing further is commemorated than that, in A. D. 534, he fought five battles, and, in the following year, was drowned in a hogshead of wine.* It is, however, but just to add, that he is represented as a good and pious sovereign, and was the first of the Irish monarchs who can, with any degree of certainty, be pronounced Christian.

At the commencement of the sixth century, Christianity had become almost universal throughout Ireland; and before its close her church could boast of a considerable number of holy persons, whose fame for sanc-

* This royal event, as appears by the fragments on the subject remaining, was commemorated by many of the poets of that period.—See the Annals of the Four Masters, ad ann. 534. It is supposed, from the mention in most of the Lives of St. Columbanus, of the circumstance of an Irish ship trading to Nantes, in the sixth century, that wine was imported into Ireland from that city.

tity and learning has not been confined to their own country, but is still cherished and held in reverence by the great majority of the Christian world. Among these ornaments of a period whose general want of intellectual illumination rendered its few shining lights the more conspicuous, stands pre-eminently the Apostle of the Western Isles, Columbkill, who was born in the reign of Murcertach, about the year 521, and who, from the great activity and variety of his spiritual enterprises, was so mixed up with the public transactions of his times, that an account of his life and acts would be found to include within its range all that is most remarkable in the contemporary history of his country.

In citing for historical purposes the Lives of Saints, of whatever age or country, considerable caution ought, of course, to be observed. But there are writers, and those not among the highest, who, in the pride of fancied wisdom, affect a contempt for this species of evidence, which is, to say the least of it, shallow. Both Montesquieu and Gibbon * knew far better how to appreciate the true value of such works, as sources of historical information; being well aware that, in times when personages renowned for sanctity held such influence over all ranks and classes, and were even controllers of the thoughts and actions of kings, it is often in the private lives of these spiritual heroes alone that

* "The ancient legendaries," says Gibbon, "deserve some regard, as they are obliged to connect their fables with the real history of their own times." Montesquieu acknowledges still more strongly the use to be derived from such works: —

"Quoiqu'on puisse reprocher aux auteurs de ces Vies d'avoir été quelquefois un peu trop crédules sur des choses que Dieu a certainement faites, si elles ont été dans l'ordre de ses desseins, on ne laisse pas d'en tirer de grandes lumières sur les mœurs et les usages de ces temps-là."—Liv. xxx. chap. 2.

Sir James Mackintosh follows eloquently in the same track: —

"The vast collections of the Lives of Saints often throws light on public events, and opens glimpses into the habits of men in those times; nor are they wanting in sources of interest, though poetical and moral rather than historical. . . . . The whole force of this noble attempt to exalt human nature was at this period spent on the Lives of the Saints,—a sort of moral heroes or demigods, without some acquaintance with whom it is hard to comprehend an age when the commemoration of the virtues then most venerated, as they were embodied in these holy men, was the principal theme of the genius of Christendom." — Vol. i. chap. 2.

See, on the same subject, the remarks of the Benedictines (Hist. Litéraire de la France), in speaking of the writers of the seventh century.

the true moving springs of the history of their age is to be sought.

Previously to entering, however, on any personal details respecting either Columba or any other of those distinguished Irishmen whose zeal contributed so much at this period, not merely in their own country, but throughout all the British Isles, to the general diffusion of Christianity, it may not be irrelevant to inquire briefly into the peculiar nature of the doctrines which these spiritual successors of our great apostle taught. An attempt has been made, enforced by the learning of the admirable Usher, to prove that the church founded by St. Patrick in Ireland held itself independent of Rome, and, on most of the leading points of Christian doctrine, professed the opinions maintained at present by protestants. But rarely, even in the warfare of religious controversy, has there been hazarded an assertion so little grounded upon fact. In addition to the original link formed with Rome, from her having appointed the first Irish missionaries, we find in a canon of one of the earliest synods held in Ireland a clear acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Roman see. Nor was this recognition confined merely to words; as, on the very first serious occasion of controversy which presented itself,— the dispute relative to the time of celebrating Easter, — it was resolved, conformably to the words of this canon, that "the question should be referred to the Head of Cities," and, a deputation being accordingly despatched to Rome for the purpose, the Roman practice, on this point, was ascertained and adopted.

Respecting the nature of the religious doctrines and observances taught by the earliest Christian preachers in Ireland, we have, both in the accounts of their devotional practices and in their writings, the most satisfactory as well as ample information. That they celebrated mass under the ancient traditional names of the Holy Mysteries of the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of Salvation*,

* The phrase used by St. Chrysostom, in speaking of the progress of the faith in the British Isles, implies in itself that the belief held in those

the Immolation of the Host, is admitted by Usher himself. But he might have found language even still stronger employed by them to express the mystery their faith acknowledged in that rite.* The ancient practice of offering up prayers for the dead †, and the belief of a middle state of existence, after this life, upon which that practice is founded, formed also parts of their creed ‡; though of the locality of the purgatorial fire their notions were, like those of the ancient Fathers, vague and undefined. In an old Life of St. Brendan, who lived in the sixth century, it is stated, "the prayer of the living doth much profit the dead;" and, among the canons of a very early Irish Synod, there is one entitled "Of the Oblation for the Dead." Of the frequent practice, indeed, of prayer and almsgiving for the relief of departed souls, there are to be found throughout the records of those times abundant proofs. In a tract attributed to Cummian, who lived in the

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regions respecting the Eucharist was the very same which he himself enforced in his writings, and which the Catholic church maintains to the present day. "They have erected churches (says the saint), and Altars of Sacrifice."

* Following the belief of the ancient Christian church, as to a Real Presence in the sacrament, they adopted the language also by which this mystery was expressed; and the phrase of "*making the body of Christ*," which occurs so frequently in the Liturgies of the primitive Church, is found likewise in the writings of the first Irish Christians. Thus Adamnan, in his Life of St. Columba, tells of that Saint ordering the bishop, Cronan, "Christi corpus ex more conficere." Lib. i. c. 44. In later Irish writers, numerous passages to the same purport may be found; but, confining myself to those only of the earlier period, I shall add but the following strong testimony from Sedulius: —

> Corpus, sanguis, aqua, tria vitæ numera nostræ:
> Fonte renascentes, membris et sanguine Christi
> Vescimur, atque ideo templum Deitatis habemur;
> Quod servare Deus nos annuat immaculatum,
> Et faciat tenues tanto Mansore capaces.
>
> *Carmen Paschale*, lib. iv.

† Oblationes pro defunctis annua die facimus. — *Tertull.*

‡ It is acknowledged by Usher that Requiem [masses were among the religious practices of the Irish Christians in those days; but he denies that they were any thing more than "an honourable commemoration of the dead, and a sacrifice of thanksgiving for their salvation." It has been shown clearly, however, that these masses were meant to be also, in the strongest sense of the word, propitiatory. In an old Irish missal, found at Bobbio, of which an account has been given in the Rer. Hibern. Script. (Ep. Nunc. cxxxviii.), there is contained a mass for the dead, entitled "Pro Defunctis," in which the following prayer, and others no less Catholic, are to be found: — "Concede propitius, ut hæc sacra oblatio mortuis prosit ad veniam, et vivis proficiat ad salutem."

seventh century, and of whose talents and learning we shall hereafter have occasion to speak, propitiatory masses for the dead are mentioned. The habit of invoking and praying to saints was, it is evident, general among the ancient Irish Christians; and a Life of St. Brigid, written, according to Ware, in the seventh century, concludes with the following words: — "There are two holy virgins in heaven who may undertake my protection, Mary and St. Brigid, on whose patronage let each of us depend."*

The penitential discipline established in their monasteries was of the most severe description. The weekly fast-days observed by the whole Irish church were, according to the practice of the primitive times, Wednesdays and Fridays; and the abstinence of the monks, and of the more pious among the laity, was carried to an extreme unknown in later days. The benefit of pilgrimages also was inculcated; and we find mention occasionally, in the Annals, of princes dying in pilgrimage.† The practice of auricular confession, and their belief in the power of the priest to absolve from sin, is proved by the old penitential canons, and by innumerable passages in the Lives of their saints.‡

The only point, indeed, either of doctrine or discipline, — and under this latter head alone the exception falls, — in which the least difference, of any moment, can be detected between the religion professed by the first Irish Christians and that of the Catholics of the present day, is with respect to the marriage of

* See Lanigan, Ecclesiast. Hist. vol. iii. chap. 20. note 107.

† See Tigernach, A. D. 610, and also 723. In the Annals of the Four Masters, A. D. 777, the pilgrimage of a son of the king of Connaught to the Isle of Hyona is recorded.

‡ On this point Usher acknowledges that "they did (no doubt) both publicly and privately make confession of their faults," (chap. 5.) and adds, in proof of this fact, what follows: — "One old penitential canon we find laid down in a synod held in this country, about the year of our Lord 450, by St. Patrick, Auxilius, and Isserninus, which is as followeth: — 'A Christian who hath killed a man, or committed fornication, or gone unto a soothsayer, after the manner of the Gentiles, for every of those crimes shall do a year of penance; when his year of penance is accomplished, he shall come with witnesses, and afterward he shall be absolved by the priest.'" Usher contends, however, for their having in so far differed from the belief of the present Catholics, that they did not attribute to the priest any more than a ministerial power in the remission of sins.

the clergy, which, as appears from the same sources of evidence that have furnished all the foregoing proofs, was, though certainly not approved of, yet permitted and practised. Besides a number of incidental proofs of this fact, the sixth Canon of the Synod attributed to St. Patrick enjoins that "the clerk's wife shall not walk out without having her head veiled."*

The evidence which Usher has adduced to prove, that communion in both kinds was permitted to the laity among the Irish, is by no means conclusive or satisfactory †; — though it would certainly appear, from one of the Canons of the Penitential of St. Columbanus ‡, that, before the introduction of his rule, novices had been admitted to the cup. It is to be remembered, however, that any difference of practice, in this respect, has been always considered as a mere point of discipline, and accordingly subject to such alteration as the change of time and circumstances may require.

* If the term clerk here be understood to comprise all the members of the clerical orders, the permission to marry extended also, of course, to priests; but it is thought by some that the words of the canon apply only to the inferior ranks of the clergy. "With respect to our English church (says Dr. Milner), at the end of the sixth century, we gather from St. Gregory's permission for the clerks in minor orders to take wives, that this was unlawful for the clergy in holy orders, namely, for bishops, priests, and deacons, agreeably to a well-known rule of reasoning, 'Exceptio confirmat regulam;' and we are justified in inferring the same with respect to the Irish clergy in St. Patrick's time." — *Inquiry into certain vulgar opinions, &c. &c.* Letter 14.

† He founds his conclusion chiefly on their use of such phrases as "the communion of the Lord's body and blood;" whereas the Catholics of the present day, among whom the laity receive the sacrament under one kind only, use the very same language.

‡ Columban. in Pœnitent., as I find it thus cited by Ceillier :—"Novi quia indocti et quicunque tales fuerint, ad calicem non accedant."

CHAP. XII.

EMINENT RELIGIOUS PERSONS, COLUMBA, COLUMBANUS, BRIGID.

Among the signs of the religious enthusiasm of that period, not the least striking is the number of persons, of both sexes, who, in the midst of so many competitors for the palm of holiness, became sufficiently eminent to attain the title of Saints. These holy persons are, by our ecclesiastical writers, distinguished into two classes, the first of which, consisting partly of foreigners and partly of natives, extended down from the coming of St. Patrick to the latter years of Tuathal's reign, about A. D. 542. To this class, which was accounted the holiest, as including in it the friends and disciples of St. Patrick, succeeded another series, reaching to the very close of the sixth century; and to this second class of Saints, Columba, or, as he is more commonly called, Columbkill, belonged. In a country where the pride of blood has been at all times so predominant, it formed no inconsiderable part of this Saint's personal advantages, that he was of royal extraction; being, by the paternal side, descended from that "father of many kings," Nial, while his mother, Æthena, was of an illustrious and princely house of Leinster. We are told of a dream which his mother had, before she was delivered of him, which prefigures so fancifully the future spread of his spiritual influence and fame, that, though but a dream, it may, perhaps, briefly be mentioned. An Angel, it is said, appeared to her, bringing a veil in his hand, of wonderful beauty, seemingly painted over with a variety of flowers, which, having presented it to her, he almost instantly again took away, and spreading it out, allowed it to fly through the air. On her asking sadly why he had deprived her of this treasure, the Angel answered that it

was far too precious to be left with her; and she then observed it, far and wide, expanding itself over the distant mountains, forests, and plains.*

This Saint was born about the year 521, in the barony of Kilmacrenan; and his name, originally Crimthan, was, by reason, it is said, of the dove-like simplicity of his character, changed afterwards into Columba. To this was added, in the course of time, the surname of Cille or Kille, making the title by which he was from thenceforth distinguished Columbkill, or Columba of the Churches. Of the different schools where he pursued his studies, the most celebrated was that of Finnian at Clonard. There had already, in the time of St. Patrick, or immediately after, sprung up a number of ecclesiastical seminaries throughout Ireland; and, besides those of Ailbe, of Ibar, of the poet Fiech, at Sletty, there appears to have been also a school at Armagh, established by the apostle himself, and entrusted, during his lifetime, to the care of his disciple Benignus. At the period we have now reached, such institutions had multiplied in every direction; but by far the most distinguished of them all, as well for the number as the superior character of its scholars, was the long renowned seminary of St. Finnian, at Clonard.† Having completed his course of studies under this master, Columba early commenced those labours by which his fame was acquired; being but in his twenty-fifth year when he

* Adamnan's Life of St. Columba, lib. iii. cap. 1. Of this remarkable piece of biography, written by an Irishman in the seventh century, the reader may not dislike to see some specimens. The following is the passage describing this dream:—"Angelus Domini in somnis genetrici venerabilis viri, quádam nocte inter conceptum et partum apparuit, eique quasi quoddam miræ pulchritudinis peplum assistens detulit: in quo veluti universorum decorosè florum depicti videbantur; quodque post aliquod breve intervallum, ejus de manibus reposcens, abstulit; elevansque et expandens, in aëre dimisit vacuo. Illa vero de illo tristificata sublato, sic ad illum venerandi habitus virum: Cur a me, ait, hoc lætificum tum cito abstrahis pallium? Ille consequenter; Idcirco, inquit, quia hoc sagum alicujus est tam magnifici honoris, quod apud te diutius retinere non poteris. His dictis, supra memoratum peplum mulier paulatim a se elongari volando videbat, camporumque latitudinem in majus crescendo excedere, montesque et saltus majore sui mensura superare."

† In this school of Finnian at Clonard, there are said to have been, at one time, three thousand scholars. "Finianus Abbas de Cluain-eraird, magister sanctorum Hiberniæ, habuit enim in sua schola de Cluain-eraird tria millia sanctorum."—*Martyr. Dungal, ad* 12 *Decemb.*

founded that monastery called Doire Calgach, near Lough Foyle, from whence the name of the town, or city, of Derry was derived. Not long after, proceeding to the southern parts of the ancient Meath, he erected another monastery, equally famous, on a site then called Dairmagh, or the Plain of the Oaks; and which had been given, as an offering "to God and St. Columba," by a pious chieftain named Brendan.*

But the Saint perceived that it was not in Ireland he could hope to reap the full harvest of his toils. Thwarted as he was, in his spiritual labours, by the eternal feuds of the Irish princes, among whom his own relatives, the Nials of the North and South, were, at all times, the most unmanageable, he resolved to seek elsewhere some more promising field of exertion; and the condition of the northern Picts in Britain, who were still sunk in all the darkness of Paganism, seemed to present the scene of action his holy ambition desired.† He had in view also, it is plain, the better instruction and guidance of that great body of his countrymen who had now settled in North Britain; nor was his relationship to the princely house which had founded that new kingdom without some share, it may be presumed, in stimulating his anxiety for its welfare. There is, in some of the various accounts of his life, a story attributing his departure from Ireland to some fierce and revengeful conduct, on his part, towards the monarch Diarmid; of which he afterwards, it is added, so bitterly repented, as to impose upon himself perpetual exile in penance of the wrong. It has been shown satisfactorily, however, that there are no grounds for this story; and that though, for some venial and unimportant proceedings, an attempt had been made to excommunicate him before his departure from Ireland, the account of his quarrel with the monarch is but an

* See Camden, 1011., where he is guilty of the double error of confounding Dearmagh with Armagh, and St. Columbanus with St. Columba.

† Venit de Hybernia Britanniam prædicaturus verbium Dei provinciis Septentrionalium Pictorum.—*Bede*, lib. iii. c. 4.

ill-constructed fable which, from the internal evidence of its inconsistencies, falls to pieces of itself.*

A. D. 563. Having obtained from his relative, Conal, who was then king of the Albanian Scots, a grant of the small island of Hy, or Iona, which was an appendage to the new Scotish kingdom, Columba, in the year 563, together with twelve of his disciples, set sail for that sequestered spot. In the same year, a sanguinary battle was fought in Ireland, between the Nials of the North and the Irish Picts, in which the latter were, with immense slaughter, defeated; and it is evident, from a passage in Adamnan's Life of Columba, which represents the Saint as conversing with Conal at the time of that battle, that he must have visited the court of the Scotish king soon after his arrival at Hy. One of his first tasks, on entering upon the management of his island, was to expel from thence some Druids who had there established their abode; this secluded island having been early one of the haunts of this priesthood, as the remains of circular temples, and other such monuments, still existing among its ruins, seem to prove. Having erected there a monastery and a church, and arranged such matters as were connected with his establishment, he now directed his attention to the main object of his great Christian enterprise — that of exploring the wild regions beyond the Grampian hills, where no missionary before himself had ever yet ventured, and endeavouring to subdue to the mild yoke of the Gospel the hardy race who were there entrenched. The territory of the northern Picts, at this period, included all that part of modern Scotland which lies to the north of the great range of the Grampian mountains †; and the residence of their king Brude, at the time of Columba's mission, was somewhere on the borders of Loch Ness. ‡

* This long story may be found, in its most abridged shape, in Usher, De Britann. Eccles. Primord. 902.

† Hoc est, eis qui arduis atque horrentibus montium jugis ab Australibus eorum sunt regionibus sequestrati. — *Bede*, lib. 3. cap. 4.

‡ Ubi verò munitio ejus, vel urbs regia fuerit, nullibi satis certo reperio. — *Adamnan.* He mentions, however, that it was near Loch Ness, — "Nesæ fluminis lacum."

Hither the courageous Saint first directed his steps; and the fame of his coming having, no doubt, preceded him, on arriving with his companions at the royal castle, he found the gates closed against him. His exclusion, however, was but of short duration. By one of those miracles to which, in the records of that all-believing age, every event in favour of the church is attributed, Columba advancing, made the sign of the cross upon the gates, and, instantly, at the touch of his hand, they flew open.* Apprised of this prodigy, the king came forward, with his whole council, to give him welcome; and from thenceforth treated his holy visiter with every mark of reverence. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the Magi — more especially by the king's tutor, Broichan — to prevent the preaching of the missionaries, and uphold the Pagan creed, their opposition proved entirely fruitless; and the conversion of the king himself, which had been early effected†, was gradually followed, in the course of this and other visits of the Saint, by the propagation of the Christian faith throughout the whole of North Pictland.‡

His apostolical labours were next extended to the Western Isles, throughout the whole of which the enlightening effects of his presence and influence were felt. Wherever he directed his steps, churches were

* Alio in tempore, hoc est in prima Sancti fatigatione itineris ad Regem Brudium, casu contigit, ut idem Rex fastu relatus regio, suæ munitionis, superbe agens, in primo beati adventu viri, non aperiret portas. Quod ut cognovit homo Dei, cum comitibus, ad valvas portarum accedens, primum Dominicæ Crucis imprimens signum, tum deinde manum pulsans contra ostia ponit: quæ continuo sponte, retro retrusis fortiter seris, cum omni celeritate aperta sunt; quibus statim apertis, Sanctus consequenter cum sociis intrat. — *Adamnan*, lib. ii. cap. 3.

† Thus it is said, in some verses quoted by Usher from an Irish Breviary —

"Relinquens patriam caram Hiberniam,
Per Christi gratiam venit ad Scotiam;
Per quem idonea vitæ primordia
Rex gentis sumpsit Pictiniæ."

‡ In an article of the Ed. Review, No. 15. art. 7., it is erroneously said, "St. Columba, who was an Irish Celt, and the Apostle of the Highlands, is not stated to have used an interpreter, when he addressed the Pictish kings, or when he preached the gospel to vast multitudes of their people." It appears on the contrary from Adamnanus, that the saint did use an interpreter on some of these occasions, — "per interpretatorem, sancto predicante viro:" and the conclusion that the Picts were not a Celtic people seems not a little confirmed by this circumstance.

erected, religious teachers supplied, and holy communities formed. Among the islands which he most favoured with his visits are mentioned Hymba and Ethica*; in the latter of which a monastery had been founded by a priest named Findchan, who incurred the displeasure of the Saint by an act strongly characteristic of those times. Aidus the Black, a prince of the royal blood of the Irish Cruthens, or Picts, having murdered, besides other victims, Diermit, the monarch of Ireland, took refuge in the monastery of Ethica, and was there, notwithstanding these crimes, raised to the priesthood.†

He superintended also the spiritual affairs of the Scotish kingdom; founding there, as elsewhere, religious establishments. From the mention, too, by his biographer Adamnan, of some Saxon converts at Hy, it seems not improbable that his fame had attracted thither some of those Anglo-Saxons who had now got footing in North Britain; and that even thus early had commenced the course of Christian kindliness towards that people, for which the Irish are so warmly commended by Bede; — forming a contrast, as it did, to the uncharitable conduct which the same writer complains of in the Britons, who were, he says, guilty of the sin of neglecting to announce the Gospel to the Anglo-Saxons.‡ As, at this time, Augustine and his brother missionaries had not yet arrived in Britain, there can hardly be a doubt that by St. Columba and his companions the work of converting the Anglo-Saxons was begun; and the Christians of that nation, mentioned by

* It is not known by what names these two islands are called at present. Pinkerton supposes that Ethica may have been the island now named Lewis; but Dr. Lanigan thinks it was no other than Eig, or Egg, an island about thirty six-miles to the north of Hy.

† Alio in tempore supra memoratus Presbyter Finchanus, Christi miles, Aidum cognomento Nigrum, regio genere ortum, Cruthinium gente, de Scotia ad Britanniam sub Clericatus habitu secum adduxit, ut in suo apud se monasterio per aliquod peregrinaretur annos: qui scilicet Aidus niger valde sanguinarius homo et multorum fuerat trucidator; qui et Dermitium filium Cerbuill, totius Scotiæ regnatorem Deo auctore ordinatum interfecerat. — *Adamnan.* cap. 4.

‡ "To the end that by reason the same nation (the Scots, or Irish) had taken care willingly and without envy to communicate to the English people the knowledge they have of the true Deity ... even as, on the contrary, the Britons would not acquaint the English with the knowledge they had of the Christian faith." — *Ecclesiast. Hist.* lib. v. cap. 23.

Adamnan as among the converts at Hy, were, it is most probable, some of the first-fruits of the Saint's apostolical labours. While engaged in his beneficent ministry among the inhabitants of the isles, Columba, more than once, found himself called upon to defend this peaceful people against the inroads of a band of plunderers from the Albanian shores, who, though themselves professing to be Christians, and, some of them, relatives of the Saint, took every opportunity of making incursions upon the Christians of the Isles.* With the same spirit which St. Patrick evinced in denouncing the pirate prince Coroticus, Columba pronounced the solemn sentence of excommunication against the chief of these marauders.

On the death of Conal, king of the British Scots, in the year 572–3, Aidan, the son of Gauran, succeeded to the throne; and it is mentioned as a proof of the general veneration in which Columba was then held, as well by sovereigns as by the clergy and the people, that he was the person selected to perform the ceremony of inauguration on the accession of the new king.† Though occupied so zealously with the spiritual interests of North Britain, he did not neglect to inform himself constantly of the state of the religious houses founded by him in Ireland, and even occasionally, we are told, repaired thither in person, when affairs of moment required his presence. An exigence of this nature, highly important in a political point of view, occurred soon after the accession of Aidan to the throne of the British Scots. A

A. D. 572-3.

* Adamnan, lib. ii. cap. 22. "Ecclesiarum persecutores," the biographer calls them.

† Columba had been, at first, unwilling to perform this ceremony; but an angel, as his biographers say, appeared to him during the night, holding a book called "The Glass Book of the Ordination of Kings," which he put into the hands of the Saint, and ordered him to ordain Aidan king, according to the directions of that book. This Liber Vitreus is supposed to have been so called from having its cover encrusted with glass or crystal. It is rather remarkable, that a learned writer on church antiquities, Martene, refers to this inauguration of Aidan by St Columba, as the most ancient instance he had met with, in the course of his reading, of the benediction of kings in Christian times. "Quorum (regum) benedictio haud minoris antiquitatis est quam imperatorum. Antiquissima omnium quas inter legendum mihi reperire licuit, ea est quæ à Columba Abbate Hiensi facta est, jussu Angeli, in Aidanum Scotorum regem."—*De Antiq. Eccles. Rit.* lib. ii. cap. 10.

claim put forth by this sovereign, as descendant of the ancient princes of Dalriada, having been contested by the Irish monarch Aidus, it was agreed that the difference between them should be submitted to the states-general of Ireland, convoked at Drumceat; and the attendance of king Aidan at this assembly being indispensable, he was accompanied thither by his friend St. Columba. Setting out in a small vessel, attended by a few monks, the Saint and the king directed their course to the north; and, after encountering a violent storm in the open sea, landed at the mouth of the river which runs into Lough Foyle, and from thence proceeded to Drumceat. They found this national assembly, which consisted not only of the kings and nobles, but likewise of the heads of clerical bodies, engaged in a discussion, the subject of which shows the singular tenacity with which old customs and institutions still held their ground among this people, even in the midst of the new light by which they were now surrounded. We have seen how powerful, in the times of Paganism, was the influence of the Bardic or Literary Order; insomuch that strong measures had been found necessary, by some of the early kings, to repress, or at least regulate, the pretensions of that body. At the time of which we are speaking, the two classes composing this Order, namely, the Fileas, or poets, and the Seanachies, or antiquaries, had become so burthensome from their numbers, and so unpopular from their insolence, that some vigorous steps were meditated against them by this assembly; and their suppression, and even banishment from the country, were on the point of being decided, when St. Columba arrived. Whether actuated by his general feeling of benevolence, or having some leaning in favour of the professors of an art which he himself practised *, the Saint interfered in

* According to Mr. O'Reilly, Columba "wrote several pieces, both in Irish and Latin. Upwards of thirty poems, in the Irish language, ascribed to him, have come down to our times, of which copies are in possession of the assistant secretary." There is, however, little or no reliance to be placed on the authenticity of the pieces attributed to this Saint; which had probably their origin in that favourite practice of the Irish writers of the middle ages, of introducing their own productions to public notice under the sanction of long celebrated names.

behalf of the threatened Bards; and prevailed so far as that, under certain limitations and restrictions, their order should still be permitted to exist.*

The important question, respecting the poets, being thus disposed of, the Assembly had next to pronounce their judgment upon the question at issue between the two kings. On the ground of his descent from Carbre Rieda, to whom, as we have seen, a grant had been made, in the middle of the third century, of all those parts of the county of Antrim which formed the territory called, from thenceforth, Dalriada, king Aidan asserted his hereditary right to the sovereignty of that territory, and maintained that, as belonging to his family, it should be exempt, if not in the whole, at least in part, from the payment of tribute to the king of Ireland, and from all such burthens as affected the rest of the kingdom. The Irish monarch, on the other hand, contended that the territory in question formed a portion of his dominions, and had always, equally with the rest, been subject to imposts and contributions; that, before the Dalriadians became sovereigns in Britain, such tribute had been always paid by that principality, nor could the elevation of its princes to a throne in North Britain make any difference in its relations to the Irish monarchy. Notwithstanding his known at-

* The whole of this account of the proceedings at Drumceat, respecting the Bards, is represented by Mr. Whitty (Popular Hist. of Ireland) as an invention of the poets of subsequent times, who, he says, "knew well the value of dignified associations, and accordingly did not fail to connect their order with the names of St. Patrick and St. Columb-cille." But the perfect consistency of the acts of the council at Drumceat, as well as of some others at a still earlier period, with all that is known of the political importance of the Irish bards in later times, is such as to confirm the historical truth of the curious circumstances above related. In a parliament held by the duke of Clarence, at Kilkenny, in the reign of Edward III., it was made penal to entertain any of the Irish minstrels, rimers, or newstellers. (*Davies's Discovery.*) Under Henry VIII., some of the coercive measures proposed by baron Finglas were directed against "Irish minstrals, rymers, shannaghs (genealogists), and bards;" and, in the time of Elizabeth, acts were passed against this order of men, which show how dangerous, as political engines, they were even at that period considered. "For that those rymors do by their ditties and rhymes made to divers lords and gentlemen in Ireland, in the commendation and high praise of extorsion, rebellion, rape, raven, and other injustice, encourage those lords and gentlemen rather to follow those vices than to leave," &c. &c. So late, indeed, as the reign of Charles I. we find "wandering poets," who sought to gain their ends, "under threat of some scandalous rhyme," made liable to imprisonment.

tachment to king Aidan, so great was the general trust in Columba's sense of justice, that to him alone the decision of the question was first referred. On his declining, however, to pronounce any opinion respecting it, the task of arbitration was committed to St. Colman,—a man deeply versed, as we are told, in legal and ecclesiastical learning,—who, on the obvious grounds, that Dalriada, being an Irish province, could not but be subject, in every respect, to the monarch of all Ireland, gave his decision against the claim of king Aidan.

During this, his last, sojourn in Ireland, Columba visited all the various religious establishments which he had founded; passing some time at his favourite monastery at Dairmagh, and there devoting himself to the arrangement of matters connected with the discipline of the church. After accomplishing, to the best of his power, all the objects he had in view in visiting Ireland, he returned to his home in North Britain,—to that "Isle of his heart," as, in some prophetic verses attributed to him, Iona is called *,—and there, assiduous to the last in attending to the care of his monasteries and numerous churches, remained till death closed his active and beneficent course. The description given of his last moments by one who received the details from an eye-witness, presents a picture at once so calm and so vivid, that I shall venture, as nearly as possible in the words of his biographer, to relate some particulars of the scene.† Having been forewarned, it is said, in his dreams, of

* "In the Isle of my heart, the Isle of my love, instead of a monk's voice there shall be lowing of cattle. But, ere the world comes to an end, Iona shall flourish as before."—Cited in *Armstrong's Gaelic Dictionary*. Dr. Johnson appears to have been animated with a similar spirit of prophecy respecting this island. "Perhaps," says the moralist, "in the revolutions of the world, Iona may be, some time again, the instructress of the western regions." (*Journey to the Western Islands.*)

† Post hæc verba de illo dicens (descendens) monticellulo, et ad monasterium revertens, sedebat in tugurio Psalterium scribens; et ad illum tertii Psalmi versiculum perveniens, ubi scribitur, Inquirentes autem Dominum non deficient omni bono, Hic, ait, in fine cessandum est paginæ; quæ vero sequuntur Baitheneus scribat.... Interim cætus monachorum cum luminaribus accurrens, Patre viso moriente, cæpit plangere; et ut ab aliquibus qui præsentes inerant didicimus, Sanctus necdum egrediente anima, apertis sursum oculis, ad utrumque latus cum mira hilaritate et lætitia circumspiciebat....Diermitius tum Sancti sanctam sublevat, ad benedicendum monachorum chorum, dexteram manum: sed et ipse venerabilis Pater in quantum poterat, suam simul movebat manum.—*Adamnan*, lib. iii. cap. 3.

the time when his death was to take place, he rose, on the morning of the day before, and ascending a small eminence, lifted up his hands and solemnly blessed the monastery. Returning from thence, he sat down in a hut adjoining, and there occupied himself in copying part of the Psalter, till, having finished a page with a passage of the thirty-third Psalm, he stopped and said, "Let Baithen write the remainder." This Baithen, who was one of the twelve disciples that originally accompanied him to Hy, had been named by him as his successor. After attending the evening service in the church, the Saint returned to his cell, and reclining on his bed of stone, delivered some instructions to his favourite attendant, to be communicated to the brethren. When the bell rang for midnight prayer, he hastened to the church, and was the first to enter it. Throwing himself upon his knees, he began to pray, — but his strength failed him; and his brethren, arriving soon after, found their beloved master reclining before the altar, and on the point of death. Assembling all around him, these holy men stood silent and weeping, while the Saint, opening his eyes, with an expression full of cheerfulness, made a slight movement of his hand, as if to give them his parting benediction, and in that effort breathed his last, being then in the seventy-sixth year of his age.

The name of this eminent man, though not so well known throughout the Latin church as that of another Irish Saint, Columbanus, with whom he is frequently confounded*, holds a distinguished place among the Roman and other martyrologies, and in the British Isles will long be remembered with traditional veneration. In Ireland, rich as have been her annals in names of saintly renown, for none has she continued to cherish so fond a reverence, through all ages, as for her great Columbkill; while that Isle of the Waves†, with

* Among the writers who have been led into this confusion is M. Thierry (Hist. de la Conquête de l'Angleterre), who, in pursuance of his professed object, — that of making his history picturesque, — has jumbled together the lives of the two saints most graphically.

† Such, according to some writers, is the meaning of the term Iona. — See *Garnett's Tour in the Highlands*, vol. i.

which his name is now inseparably connected, and which, through his ministry, became "the luminary of the Caledonian regions*," has far less reason to boast of her numerous Tombs of Kings, than of those heaps of votive pebbles left by pilgrims on her shore, marking the path that once led to the honoured Shrine of her Saint.† So great was the reverence paid to his remains in North Britain, that, at the time when the island of Hy began to be infested by the Danes, Kenneth III. had his bones removed to Dunkeld, on the river Tay, and there founding a church, dedicated it to his memory; while the Saint's crosier, and a few other relics, were all that fell to the share of the land of his birth.‡

In the Annals of the Four Masters, for the year 1006, we find mention made of a splendid copy of the Four Gospels, said to have been written by St. Columba's own hand, and preserved at Kells in a cover, richly ornamented with gold.§ In the time of Usher, this precious

* "We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."—*Dr. Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands.*

† "The Port na Curachan, where Columba is said to have first landed;—a bay towards the west, which is marked by large conical heaps of pebbles, the penitentiary labours, as tradition says, of pilgrims to his shrine."—*Macculloch's Western Isles.*

‡ Among the various prophecies attributed to St. Columba, the arrival of the English and their conquest of the country were, it is said, foretold by him. "Then," says Giraldus, "was fulfilled the alleged prophecy of Columba, of Hibernia, who long since foretold that, in this war, there should be so great a slaughter of the inhabitants, that their enemies would swim up to the knees in their blood." (*Hibern. Expugnat.* lib. ii. cap. 16.) There is yet another remarkable passage of this prophecy, which adjourns its fulfilment to a very remote period.—"The Irish are said to have four prophets, Moling, Braccan, Patrick, and Columbkill, whose books, written in the Irish language, are still extant; and speaking of this conquest (by the English), they all bear witness that in after times the island of Ireland will be polluted with many conflicts, long strife, and much slaughter. But they all pronounce that the English shall not have a complete victory till but a very little before the day of judgment." "Omnes testantur eam crebris conflictibus, longoque vertamine multa in posterum tempora multis cædibus fœdaturam. Sed vix parum ante diem judicii plenam Anglorum populo victoriam compromittunt." (*Ib.* cap. 33.)

§ Usher mentions also another copy of the Gospels, said to have been written by Columba's own hand, which had been preserved at the monastery founded by that Saint at Durrow. "Inter cujus κειμηλια Evangeliorum codex vetustissimus asservabatur, quem ipsius Columbæ fuisse monachi dictitabant: ex quo, et non minoris antiquitatis altero, eidem Columbæ assignato (quem in urbe Kells sive Kenlis dictâ Midenses sacrum habent) diligentè cum editione vulgatâ Latinâ collatione factâ, in nostros usus variantium lectionum binos libellos concinnavimus."—*Eccles. Primord.* 691.

manuscript was still numbered among the treasures of Kells*; and if not written by Columba himself, is little doubted to have been the work of one of his disciples.

The reigns of those monarchs who filled, in succession, the Irish throne, during the interval which the acts of this eminent man occupied, possess little interest except what is imparted to them by their connection with the great Saints of those times. Uninteresting, however, as are the events of these reigns, the historian is bound not to pass them wholly in silence, but at least to number the royal links as they pass, however void they may be of lustre or value. To Murkertach, the last occupant of the throne whom we have noticed, succeeded Tuathal Maolgarb, great grandson of Nial the Great, during whose reign of eleven years the only events that stand out prominently in his annals, are the death of the aged bishop Moctheus, the last surviving disciple of St. Patrick, and the foundation of Columba's favourite establishment, the monastery of Daire-Calgaich, or Derry. His successor Diarmid's life and reign are somewhat more fertile in events. With the fate common to most Roydamnas, or successors apparent, he had been, throughout the reign of Tuathal, an object of jealousy and suspicion; and was even, for some time, through fear of persecution, obliged to conceal himself among the islets of Lough Rie. It was here, doubtless, that his friendship with St. Kieran, the eminent founder of Clonmacnois, commenced; and either then, or on his accession to the monarchy, he made a grant of one of the islands to this Saint, who, building a monastery upon the spot, was soon joined by a numerous company of monks, and called up around him, in those solitudes, the voice of psalmody and prayer. By the same royal patronage, he was enabled, not many years after, to accomplish a still greater design; for, a site being granted to him, by the monarch,

A. D. 527.

A. D. 539.

* This Kells manuscript is supposed to have been the same now preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, on the margin of which are the following words, written by O'Flaherty in the year 1677: "Liber autem hic scriptus est manu ipsius B. Columbæ."

on the western bank of the Shannon*, St. Kieran founded there that great monastery of Clonmacnois, which became in after-times so celebrated for its nine Royal Churches, and all those luxuries of ecclesiastical architecture which gathered around its site.†

A.D. 554. In the reign of this monarch, the ancient Hall or Court of Tara, in which, for so many centuries, the Triennial Councils of the nation had been held, saw, for the last time, her kings and nobles assembled within its precincts; and the cause of the desertion of this long honoured seat of legislation shows to what an enormous height the power of the ecclesiastical order had then risen. Some fugitive criminal, who had fled for sanctuary to the monastery of St. Ruan, having been dragged forcibly from thence to Tara, and there put to death, the holy abbot and his monks cried aloud against the sacrilegious violation; and proceeding in solemn procession to the Palace, pronounced a curse upon its walls. "From that day," say the annalists, "no king ever sat again at Tara;" and a poet who wrote about that period, while mourning evidently over the fall of this seat of grandeur, ventures but to say, "It is not with my will that Teamor is deserted."‡ A striking memorial of the church's triumph on the occasion, was preserved in the name of distinction given to the monastery§, which was, ever after in memory of this malediction, called "The Monastery of the Curses of Ireland."

A.D. 599. On the death of Diarmid, who, after a reign of twenty-one years, was killed by Aidus, a Dalriadian prince, surnamed the Black, the crown reverted to the Eugenian branch of the northern Nials; and two brothers, Donald and Fergus, who had fought with success against the Nials of the South, in the great battle of Cul-

* Among the lands bestowed for this purpose, were some contiguous to Mount Usneach, which had been formerly occupied by the Druids.

† See, for an account of these churches, Ware, vol. i.

‡ Irish Hymn, attributed to Fiech, a disciple of St. Patrick, but evidently, from this allusion to the desertion of Tara, written at least as late as the time of king Diarmid.

§ Annal. Ulton. ad ann. 564, note.

dremni, were elevated to the sovereignty. The joint reign of these royal brothers lasted but for a year*, during which an invasion of the province of Leinster for the enforcement of the odious tribute, and a furious battle in consequence, on the banks of the Liffey, in which the Lagenians were defeated, marked with the accustomed track of blood the short term of their copartnership. To these succeeded another pair of associates in the throne, named Boetan and Eochad; and after them, at an interval of but two years, Anmerius, or Anmery, a prince remarkable, it is said, for learning, who, after reigning little more than the same period, was cut off by a violent death; as was also his successor, Boetan the Second, in the course of less than a year. The prince raised to the sovereignty after this last-named monarch was that Aidus, of whom we have already spoken, — memorable for the great convention which he held at Drumceat, — and whose reign, far more fortunate than the passing pageants which had gone before him, lasted for the long space of six and twenty years.

To give an account of all the numerous Saints, male and female, whom the fervent zeal of this period quickened into existence and celebrity, would be a task so extensive as to require a distinct historian to itself; and, luckily, this important part of Ireland's history, during her first Christian ages, has been treated fully, and with the most sifting zeal and industry, by a writer in every respect qualified for such a task, and who has left no part of his ample subject untouched or unexplored.† Referring, therefore, to this learned historian for a detailed account of the early Irish church, I shall notice such only of its most distinguished ornaments as became popularly known throughout Europe, and regained for the "Sacred Island" of other days all its ancient fame, under the new Christian designation of "the Island of Saints."

The institution of female monasteries, or nunneries,

* O'Flaherty. The Annals of the Four Masters prolong it to three years.

† Ecclesiastical History of Ireland, by the Rev. John Lanigan, D.D.

such as, in the fourth century, were established abroad by Melania, and other pious women, was introduced into Ireland, towards the close of the fifth century, by St. Brigid; and so general was the enthusiasm her example excited, that the religious order which she instituted spread its branches through every part of the country. Taking the veil herself at a very early age, when, as we are told, she was clothed in the white garment, and the white veil placed upon her head, she was immediately followed, in this step, by seven or eight other young maidens, who, attaching themselves to her fortunes, formed, at the first, her small religious community.* The pure sanctity of this virgin's life, and the supernatural gifts attributed to her, spread the fame she had acquired more widely every day, and crowds of young women and widows applied for admission into her institution. At first she contented herself with founding establishments for her followers in the respective districts of which they were natives; and in this task the bishops of the different dioceses appear to have concurred with and assisted her. But the increasing number of those who required her own immediate superintendence rendered it necessary to form some one great establishment, over which she should herself preside; and the people of Leinster, who claimed to be peculiarly entitled to her presence, from the illustrious family to which she belonged having been natives of their province, sent a deputation to her, to entreat that she would fix among them her residence. To this request the Saint assented; and a habitation was immediately provided for herself and her sister nuns, which formed the commencement both of her great monastery and of the town or city of Kildare. The name of *Kill-dara*†, or Cell of the Oak,

* The bishop who admitted her into the number of Sacred Virgins, was named Maccaile, or Maccaleus; and the ceremony is thus described by her biographer, Cogitosus: — "Qui (Maccaleus) cæleste intuens desiderium et pudicitiam, et tantum castitatis amorem in tali virgine, pallium album et vestem candidam super ipsius venerabile caput imposuit." — Cap. 3.

† Illa jam cella Scotice dicitur *Kill-dara*, Latine vero sonat *Cella Quercûs*. Quercus enim altissima ibi erat, cujus stipes adhuc manet. — *S. Brigid. Vita.*

was given to the monastery, from a very high oak-tree which grew near the spot, and of which the trunk was still remaining in the twelfth century;—no one daring, as we are told by Giraldus, to touch it with a knife. The extraordinary veneration in which St. Brigid was held, caused such a resort of persons of all ranks to this place—such crowds of penitents, pilgrims, and mendicants—that a new town sprang up rapidly around her, which kept pace with the growing prosperity of the establishment. The necessity of providing spiritual direction, as well for the institution itself as for the numerous settlers in the new town, led to the appointment of a bishop of Kildare, with the then unusual privilege of presiding over all the churches and communities belonging to the order of St. Brigid, throughout the kingdom.

Among the eminent persons who were in the habit of visiting or corresponding with this remarkable woman, are mentioned St. Ailbe, of Emly, one of the fathers of the Irish church, and the Welsh author, Gildas, who is said to have sent to St. Brigid, as a token of his regard, a small bell cast by himself.* By one of those violations of chronology not unfrequently hazarded for the purpose of bringing extraordinary personages together, an intimate friendship is supposed to have existed between St. Brigid and St. Patrick, and she is even said to have woven, at the apostle's own request, the shroud in which he was buried. But with this imagined intercourse between the two saints, the dates of their respective lives are inconsistent; and it is but just possible that Brigid might have seen the great apostle of her

* A veneration for small portable bells, as well as for staves, which had once belonged to holy persons, was, in the time of Giraldus, common both among the laity and clergy. "Campanas baiulas, baculos quoque in superiori parte cameratos, auro et argento vel ære contectos, aliasque hujusmodi sanctorum reliquias, in magna reverentia tam Hyberniæ et Scotiæ, quam et Walliæ populus et clerus habere solent." *Itiner. Camb.* lib. i. cap. 2. The same writer mentions the Campana Fugitiva of O'Toole, the chieftain of Wicklow; and we are informed by Colgan (in Triad.) that whenever St. Patrick's portable bell tolled, as a preservative against evil spirits and magicians, it was heard from the Giant's Causeway to Cape Clear, from the Hill of Howth to the western shores of Connemara, "per totam Hiberniam." See note on this subject in Hardiman's Irish Minstrelsy, vol. i.

country, as she was a child of about twelve years old when he died.

Among the miracles and gifts by which, no less than by her works of charity and holiness, the fame of St. Brigid and her numerous altars was extended, has always been mentioned, though on the sole authority of Giraldus Cambrensis, that perpetual Fire, at Kildare, over which, through successive ages, the holy virgins are said to have kept constant watch; and which, so late as the time of Giraldus, about six hundred years from the date of St. Brigid, was, as he tells us, still unextinguished. Whether this rite formed any part of the saint's original institution*, or is to be considered but as an innovation of later times, it is, at all events, certain that at the time when Kildare was founded, the policy of converting to the purposes of the new faith those ancient forms and usages which had so long been made to serve as instruments of error, was very generally acted upon; and, in the very choice of a site for St. Brigid's monastery, the same principle is manifest; the old venerable oak, already invested with the solemnity of Druidical associations, having, in this, as in most other instances of religious foundation, suggested the selection of the spot where the Christian temple was to rise.

Having lived to reap the reward of her self-devotion and zeal, in the perfect success and even ascendancy of the institution which she had founded, St. Brigid closed her mortal course at Kildare, about A. D. 525, four years, it is calculated, after the birth of the great Columbkill†, being herself, at the time of her death, about 74 years of age. The honour of possessing the remains

* Dr. Lanigan repels indignantly the notion of Ledwich and others, that St. Brigid, and her sister nuns of Kildare, were "but a continuation of heathen druidesses, who preserved from remotest ages an inextinguishable fire." There is, however, an ordinance, of Scriptural authority, in which St. Brigid may have found a sanction for her shrines. "The fire upon the altar (of the Tabernacle) shall be burning in it, and shall not be put out."—*Leviticus*, chap. vi. ver. 12. It was for contemning this inextinguishable fire, and using a profane fire in its stead, that the Levites Nadab and Abihu were miraculously put to death. See *Dr. Milner's Inquiry*, Letter 11.

† According to other accounts he was born about 539.—"A date much earlier," says Dr. Lanigan, "than that of Mabillon and others, but much more probable."

of this holy woman was, for many centuries, contested not only by different parts of Ireland, but likewise by North Britain; the Irish of Ulster contending strenuously that she had been buried, not at Kildare, but in Down*; while the Picts as strongly insisted that Abernethy was her resting-place; and the British Scots, after annexing the Pictish territories to their own, paid the most fervent homage to her supposed relics in that city. But in no place, except at Kildare, was her memory cherished with such affectionate reverence as in that seat of all saintly worship, the Western Isles; where to the patronage of St. Brigid most of the churches were dedicated: by her name, one of the most solemn oaths of the islanders was sworn; and the first of February, every year, was held as a festival in her honour.†

It has been already observed that the eminent Irish saint, Columbkill, has been often confounded, more especially by foreign writers, with his namesake, Columba, or Columbanus, whose fame, from the theatre of his holy labours having been chiefly France and Italy, has, among the people of the Continent, obscured or rather absorbed within its own light that of the apostle of the Western Isles. The time of the birth of St. Columbanus is placed about forty years later than that of Columbkill, A. D. 559; and though not of royal extraction, like his distinguished precursor, he appears to have been of a noble family, and also endowed by nature with what he himself considered to be a perilous gift, personal beauty. In order to escape the dangerous allurements of the world, he withdrew from his native province, Leinster; and, after some time passed in sacred studies, resolved to devote himself to a mo-

A. D. 559.

* The claims of Down to the possession of her remains, as well as of those of St. Patrick and St. Columba, are commemorated in the following couplet, cited by Camden: —

"Hi tres in Duno tumulo tumulantur in uno
Brigida, Patricius atque Columba pius."

† "From these considerations," says Macpherson, "we have reason to suspect that the Western Isles of Scotland were, in some one period or other, during the reign of popery, and perhaps in a great measure appropriated to St. Brigid." — *Crit. Dissert.*

In Gaelic, the name of Brigid is, according to this writer, Bride; and by *Hebrides*, or *Ey-brides*, is meant, he says, the Islands of Brigid.

nastic life. The monastery of Bangor, in Ulster, already celebrated in Ireland, but, by the subsequent career of St. Columbanus, rendered famous throughout all Europe, was the retreat chosen by this future antagonist of pontiffs and kings; and at that school he remained, under the discipline of the pious St. Congall, for many years. At length, longing for a more extended sphere of action, he resolved to betake himself to some foreign land; and having, at the desire of the abbot, selected from among his brethren, twelve worthy companions, turned his eyes to the state of the Gauls, or France, as requiring especially such a mission as he meditated. By the successive irruptions of the northern barbarians into that country all the elements of civilised life had been dispersed, and a frightful process of demoralisation was now rapidly taking place, to which a clergy, indolent and torpid, and often even interested in the success of the spoilers, could oppose but a feeble check.* For a missionary, therefore, like Columbanus, full of courage in the cause of Christ, there could not have been selected a more inviting or productive field of enterprise.

Proceeding to the province which has been since called Franche Comté, one of the first acts of his ministry was to erect a monastery on a spot named Luxeuil, in a thick part of the forest, at the foot of the Vosges. From hence so widely was the fame of his sanctity diffused, and so great the concourse of persons, of all ranks, but more especially, as we are told, of young nobles, who came to profit by his instructions, and devote themselves to a religious life, that he found it necessary to establish a second monastery in the neighbourhood, to which, on account of the abundance of its

* This state of things is acknowledged by the saint's biographer Jonas: — "Ubi tunc vel ob frequentiam hostium externorum, vel negligentiam præsulum, religionis virtus pene abolita habebatur; fides tantum remanebat Christiana. Nam pœnitentiæ medicamentum et mortificationis amor vix vel paucis in illis reperiebatur locis." — *S. Columban. Vita.*

"The clergy of the Roman church," says Mr. James (Hist. of Charlemagne, Introduct.), "thickly spread over every part of Gaul, without excepting the dominions of Aquitaine and Burgundy, had already courted the Franks, even when governed by a heathen monarch; but now that he professed the same faith with themselves, they spared neither exertions nor intrigues to facilitate the progress of his conquests."

springs, he gave the name of Fontaines.* In times, however, when the priest alone could present any effectual countercheck to the soldier, so active and daring a mind as that of the abbot of Luxeuil could not long remain uninvolved in public strife; and his courageous frankness in reproving the vices of the young Thierry, king of Burgundy, drew upon him the enmity as well of that prince as of the fierce vindictive queen dowager, Brunehaut. The details of the scenes and transactions in which, so perilously to his own safety, the Irish saint was brought into collision with these barbarian potentates, besides that they belong more properly to foreign history, would usurp a space, perhaps, disproportionate to their interest. They will be found worthy, however, of a brief, passing notice, less as history, than as pictures for the imagination, in which the figure of the stern but simple and accomplished missionary stands out to the eye with the more force and dignity from the barbaric glare and pomp of the scenes and personages around him.

Thus, on one occasion when the queen dowager, seeing him enter the royal courts, brought forth the four illegitimate children of king Thierry to meet him, the saint emphatically demanded what they wanted. "They are the king's children," answered Brunehaut, "and are come to ask your blessing."—"These children," replied Columbanus, "will never reign: they are the offspring of debauchery." Such insulting opposition to her designs for her grandchildren roused all the rage of this Jezebel, and orders were issued withdrawing some privileges which the saint's monasteries had hitherto enjoyed. For the purpose of remonstrating against this wrong, he sought the palace of the king; and, while waiting the

* In speaking of this monastery, the Benedictines say, "Fontaines n'est plus aujourdhui qu'un Prieuré dépendant de Luxeu." On the latter establishment they pronounce the following eulogium:—"Les grands hommes qui en sortirent en bon nombre, tant pour gouverner des églises entières que de simples monastères, répandirent en tant d'endroits les maximes salutaires de ce sacré désert que plusieurs de nos provinces parûrent avoir changé de face. Et à qui doit revenir la principale gloire de tous ces avantages, sinon à leur premier Institeur le B. Columban?"

royal audience, rich viands and wines were served up for his refreshment. But the saint sternly refused to partake of them, saying, "It is written, 'the Most High rejects the gifts of the impious;' nor is it fitting that the mouths of the servants of God should be defiled with the viands of one who inflicts on them such indignities."

Another scene of the same description occurred subsequently at Luxeuil. The monastic Rule introduced into France by Columbanus, though afterwards incorporated, or rather confounded, with that of St. Benedict*, was derived originally from the discipline established at the monastery of Bangor, in Ireland; and one of the regulations most objected to, in the system followed both at Luxeuil and Fontaines, was that by which access to the interior of these monasteries was restricted. On this point, as on many others, an attempt was made, by the revengeful Brunehaut, to excite a persecution against the saint; and the king, envenomed by her representations, was induced to join in her plans. Resolved to try the right of entrance in person, he proceeded, accompanied by a train of nobles, to the monastery; and finding Columbanus himself at the gate, said, as he forced his way in, "If you desire to derive any benefit from our bounty, these places must be thrown open to every comer." He had already got as far as the Refectory, when, with a courage worthy of a St. Ambrose, Columbanus thus addressed him:—"If you endeavour to violate the discipline here established, know that I dispense with your presents, and with every aid that it is in your power to lend; and, if you now come hither to disturb the monasteries of the servants of God, I tell you that your kingdom shall be destroyed, and with it all your royal race." The king terrified, it is said, by this denunciation, immediately withdrew.

A speech attributed to the Burgundian monarch, on

* See, for several instances in which the two Rules are thus confounded, Usher's Ecclesiar. Primord. 1050. "Non quod una eademque esset utriusque Regula; sed quod Columbani sectatores, majoris profectus ergo, duas illas celeberrimas asceticæ vitæ normas conjunxissent, quæ mediis hisce temporibus in Italia, Gallia, et Germania solæ enitebant et apparebant."— *Usser.*

this occasion, betrays no want either of tolerance or of the good sense from which that virtue springs. "I perceive you hope," said he to Columbanus, "that I shall give you the crown of martyrdom; but I am not so unwise as to commit so heinous a crime. As your system, however, differs from that of all other times, it is but right that you should return to the place from whence you came." Such a suggestion, from royal lips, was a command; but the noble Scot was not so easily to be separated either from the companions who had followed his fortunes from home, or those friendships he had formed in a strange land. "If they would have me depart," said he, "they must drag me from the cloister by force:" — and to these violent means it was found necessary, at last, to have recourse; a party of soldiers having been ordered by his royal persecutors to proceed to Luxeuil, and drive him from the monastery. The whole of the brotherhood expressed their readiness to follow their abbot to any part of the world; but none were allowed to accompany him except his own countrymen, and such few Britons as had attached themselves to the community. A corps of guards was sent to escort them on their route towards Ireland, and it was to the commander of this escort that, on their arrival at Auxerre, Columbanus pronounced that terrible prediction, as it has been called, of the union of all the crowns of France on the single head of Clotaire: — "Remember what I now tell you," said the intrepid monk; "that very Clotaire whom ye now despise will, in three years' time, be your master." A.D. 610.

On the arrival of the saint and his companions at Nantes, where it was meant to embark them for Ireland, a fortunate accident occurred to prevent the voyage; and he was still reserved for those further toils in foreign lands to which he had felt himself called. Being now free to pursue his own course, he visited successively the courts of Clotaire and Theodobert, by both of whom he was received with marked distinction, and

even consulted on matters vital to the interests of his kingdom by Clotaire. After an active course of missionary labours throughout various parts of France and Germany, the saint, fearful of again falling into the hands of his persecutors, Brunehaut and Thierry, whose powers of mischief their late successes had much strengthened, resolved to pass with his faithful companions into Italy; and, arriving at Milan, at the court of Agilulph, king of the Lombards, received from that sovereign and his distinguished queen, Theodelinda, the most cordial attentions.

It is supposed to have been during his stay at Milan that Columbanus addressed that spirited letter to Boniface IV., respecting the question of the Three Chapters, in which, distinguishing between the Chair of Rome and the individual who may, for the moment, occupy it, he shows how compatible may be the most profound and implicit reverence towards the papacy, with a tone of stern and uncompromising reprehension towards the pope. The decision of the Fifth General Council, held in the year 553, which condemned the writings known by the name of the Three Chapters, as heterodox, had met with considerable opposition from many of the Western bishops; and those of Histria and Liguria were the most obstinate in their schism. The queen Theodelinda, who had so much distinguished herself in the earlier part of her reign by the vigour with which she had freed her kingdom from the inroads of Arianism, had, not many years before the arrival of Columbanus at Milan, awakened the alarm of the Roman court by treating with marked favour and encouragement the schismatic bishops of Histria; and it was only by a course of skilful management that St. Gregory averted the danger, or succeeded in drawing back this princess to her former union with the church. It would appear, however, that, after the death of that great pope, the Lombard court had again fallen off into schism;—for it was confessedly at the strong instance of Agilulph himself, that Columbanus addressed his expostulatory letter to pope

Boniface*; and the views which he takes of the question in that remarkable document, are, for the most part, those of the schismatics or defenders of the Three Chapters. Setting aside, however, all consideration of the Saint's orthodoxy on this point†, his letter cannot but be allowed the praise of unshrinking manliness and vigour. Addressing Boniface himself in no very complaisant terms, he speaks of his predecessor, pope Vigilius, with bitter and, in some respects, deserved reproach; declaring that pope to have been the prime mover of all the scandal that had occurred.‡ With national warmth, too, he boldly vindicates the perfect orthodoxy of his fellow-countrymen, the Irish, assuring Boniface that they had never yet swerved from the apostolic doctrines delivered to them by Rome; and that there had never been among them any heretics, Jews, or schismatics. §

Having received permission from king Agilulph to fix himself in whatever part of the Lombard dominions he should think fit, Columbanus selected a retired spot amidst the Apennines; and, founding there the monastery of Bobbio, passed in that retreat the brief remainder of his days; dying on the 21st of November, A. D. 615.‖ A. D. 615.

* Among other passages, to this purport, in his letter, is the following: —"A rege cogor ut sigillatim suggeram tuis piis auribus sui negotium doloris. Dolor namque suus est schisma populi pro regina, pro filio, forte et pro se ipso."

† The Benedictines thus account for the part which he took on this question: — "St. Columban, au reste, ne parle de la sorte dans cette lettre que parcequ'il était mal instruit de la grande affaire des Trois Chapitres; et qu'il avait été sans doute prévenu à ce sujet par Agilulfe, qui s'en était déclaré le fauteur, et peut-être par quelques uns des schismatiques de Lombardie."— *Hist. Litt. de la France*, tom. iv.

A letter of pope Gregory on the subject of this now forgotten controversy has been erroneously supposed to have been addressed to the Irish, — "Gregorius universis Episcopis ad Hiberniam," as the epistle is headed in some old editions of Gregory's works. But it is plain that "Hiberniam" has here been substituted, by mistake, for "Histriam," in which latter country the schism on this point chiefly raged. See Dr. Lanigan, chap. 13. note 57.

‡ Vigila, quia forte non bene vigilavit Vigilius, quem caput scandali ipsi clamant.

§ Nullus hæreticus, nullus Judæus, nullus schismaticus fuit: sed fides catholica, sicut a vobis primum, sanctorum scilicet apostolorum successoribus, tradita est, inconcussa tenetur.

‖ Among the poetical remains of Columbanus are some verses, of no inconsiderable merit, in which he mentions his having then reached the years of an eighteenth Olympiad. The poem is addressed to his friend Fedolius, and concludes as follows: —

"Hæc tibi dictâram morbis oppressus acerbis
Corpore quos fragili patior, tristique senectâ!

The various countries and places with which the name of this great saint is connected, have multiplied his lasting titles to fame. While Ireland boasts of his birth, and of having sent forth, before the close of the sixth century, so accomplished a writer from her schools, France remembers him by her ancient abbeys of Luxeuil and Fontaines; and his fame in Italy still lives, not only in the cherished relics at Bobbio, — in the coffin, the chalice, the holly staff of the founder, and the strange sight of an Irish missal in a foreign land*, — but in the yet fresher and more every-day remembrance bestowed upon his name by its association with the beautifully situated town of San Columbano, in the territory of Lodi.

The writings of this eminent man that have come down to us display an extensive and various acquaintance, not merely with ecclesiastical, but with classical literature. From a passage in his letter to Boniface, it appears that he was acquainted both with the Greek and Hebrew languages; and when it is recollected that he did not leave Ireland till he was nearly fifty years of age, and that his life afterwards was one of constant activity and adventure, the conclusion is obvious, that all this knowledge of elegant literature must have been acquired in the schools of his own country. Such a result from a purely Irish education, in the middle of the sixth century, is, it must be owned, not a little remarkable.† Among his extant works are some Latin

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Nam dum præcipiti labuntur tempora cursu,
Nunc ad Olympiadis ter senos venimus annos.
Omnia prætereunt, fugit irreparabile tempus.
Vive, vale lætus, tristisque memento senectæ."

* Dr. O'Connor supposes this missal to have been brought from Luxeuil to Bobbio by some followers of St. Columbanus: — "Ad horum vagantium (episcoporum) usum, codicem de quo agimus exaratum fuisse vel inde patet, quod fuerit Missale portabile, quod allatum fuerit seculo VIImo, ex Hibernorum monasterio Luxoviense in Gallia, ad Hibernorum monasterium Bobiense in Alpibus Cottiis."— *Ep. Nunc.*

† La Lumière que S. Columban répandit par son sçavoir et sa doctrine dans tous les lieux où il se montra l'a fait comparer par un écrivain du même siècle au soleil dans sa course de l'orient à l'occident. Il continua, après sa mort, de briller dans plusieurs disciples qu'il avait formés aux lettres et à la piété."— *Hist. Litt. de la France.*

poems, which, though not admissible, of course, to the honours of comparison with any of the writings of a classic age, shine out in this twilight period of Latin literature with no ordinary distinction.* Though wanting the free and fluent versification of his contemporary Fortunatus, he displays more energy both of thought and style; and, in the becoming gravity of his subjects, is distinguished honourably from the episcopal poet.† In his prose writings, the style of Columbanus is somewhat stiff and inflated; more especially in the letters addressed by him to high dignitaries of the church, where the effort to elevate and give force to his diction is often too visible to be effective. In the moral instructions, however, written for his monks, the tone both of style and thought is, for the most part, easy and unpretending.

CHAP. XIII.

DISPUTES RESPECTING THE PASCHAL COMPUTATION. — LEARNED IRISH MISSIONARIES OF THE SEVENTH, EIGHTH, AND NINTH CENTURIES.

On the question respecting the time of keeping Easter, which, about the beginning of the seventh century, produced such a contest between the British and Irish clergy on one side, and the church of Rome and her

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The same learned writers, in speaking of the letters of St. Columbanus still extant, say, — "On a peu de monuments des VI. et VII. siècles où l'on trouve plus d'érudition ecclésiastique qu'il y en a dans les cinque lettres dont on vient de rendre compte."

* "On voit effectivement par la lecture de son poëme à Fedolius en particulier, qu'il possédait l'histoire et la fable. Quoique sa versification soit bien éloignée de la perfection de celle des anciens, elle ne laisse pas néanmoins d'avoir son mérite; et l'on peut assurer qu'il y a peu de poëtes de son temps qui aient mieux réussi à faire des vers."— *Hist. Litt., &c.*, par des Religieux Benedictins.

† Those who are at all acquainted with the verses of this bishop, written, most of them, "inter pocula,"— as he himself avows, in his Dedicatory Epistle to Pope Gregory, — will be inclined to agree that it was not difficult to surpass him in decorum.

new missionaries in Britain upon the other, some letters were addressed by Columbanus to the Gallican bishops and the pope; in which, defending the Paschal system, as it had been always observed by his countrymen, he requests "to be allowed to follow the tradition of his elders, in so far as it is not contrary to faith." Though upon a point by no means essential as regarded either faith or discipline, yet so eagerly was this controversy entered into by the learned Irish of that day, and with so much of that attachment to old laws and usages which has at all periods distinguished them, that a brief account of the origin and nature of the dispute forms a necessary part of the history of those times.

Very early in the annals of the Christian church, a difference of opinion with respect to the time of celebrating Easter had arisen; and it was not till the great council of Nice, A. D. 325, had prescribed a rule by which the day of this festival was to be fixed, that, throughout the Asiatic and Western churches, a uniformity of practice in the time of celebrating it was observed. Owing to the difference, however, of the cycles, used by different churches, in making their calculations, it was soon found, that to preserve this desired uniformity would be a matter of much difficulty. By the decree of the Council of Nice it was fixed, that the Paschal festival should be held on the Sunday next after the fourteenth day of the first lunar month. In determining this time, however, the church of Rome and the church of Alexandria differed materially; the former continuing to compute by the old Jewish cycle of eighty-four years, while the latter substituted the cycle of nineteen years, as corrected by Eusebius; and the consequence was a difference, sometimes of nearly a month, between the Alexandrian and Roman calculations.

When St. Patrick came on his mission to Ireland, he introduced the same method of Paschal computation, namely, by the cycle of eighty-four years, which was then practised at Rome, and which the apostle taught as he had learned it in Gaul from Sulpicius Severus, by

whom a change only of the mode of reckoning the days of the moon was introduced into it. To this method the Irish as well as the British churches continued to adhere, until subsequently to the arrival of Augustine upon his mission to Britain. In the mean time, the Romans, having in vain endavoured, by conference and concession, to adjust the differences between the Alexandrian calculations and their own, thought it advisable, for the sake of peace, to try a new method; and the cycle of Dionysius Exiguus, framed about 525, being in agreement with the Alexandrian method and rules, was adopted by them about the middle of the sixth century.

From the little communication that took place between the churches of the British Isles and Rome — owing to the troubled state of the intervening nations, and the occupation of the coasts of Britain by the Saxons — nothing was known in these countries of the adoption of a new cycle by Rome; and, accordingly, when Augustine and his brethren arrived, they found both the British and the Irish in perfect ignorance of the reformation which had, in the interim, been made, and computing their Easter by the old cycle of eighty-four years, as formerly practised at Rome. In one particular alone, the change introduced by Sulpicius, did the Irish church — to which my remarks shall henceforward be confined — differ from the system originally pursued by the Romans; and this difference, which was, in reality, rather a correction of the old Roman cycle than a departure from it*, consisted in their admission of the fourteenth day of the month, as fit for the celebration of Easter, if falling on a Sunday. The fourteenth day had long been in disrepute throughout Christendom, both as being the day on which the Jews always celebrated their

* Usher thus explains this correction: — "Quum autem Sulpitius Severus *bidui* illum inter Cycli Alexandrini et Romani neomenias observavisset discrepantiam, vidissetque Romanis *decimamsextam* lunam numeratam quæ Alexandrinis, cœlo etiam demonstrante (uti ex Cyrillo retulimus) erat tantum *decimaquarta*, hunc Romani calculi errorem ita emendandum censuit, ut non jam amplius a XVI. ad XXII., sed a XIV. luná ad XX. ex antiquo illo annorum 84 laterculo Dominicæ Paschales excerperentur."

Pasch, and as having been also the time chosen for that festival by the Quartodeciman heretics. But there was this material difference between their practice and that of the Irish, that, while the Jews and Asiatic heretics celebrated Easter always on the fourteenth day of the moon, let it fall on whatever day of the week it might, the Irish never held that festival on the fourteenth, unless it were a Sunday. The Roman missionaries, however, chose to keep this essential difference out of sight; and unjustly confounding the Easter of the Irish with that of the Judaising Quartodecimans, involved in one common charge of heresy all who still adhered to the old Roman rule.*

A. D. 609. With their usual fondness for ancient usages, the Irish persisted in following the former rule; and, in the spirit with which Columbanus, as we have seen, took up the question against the Gallican bishops, he faithfully represented and anticipated the feelings of his fellow-countrymen. The first we hear, however, of the dispute, in Ireland, occurs on the occasion of a letter addressed, in 609, by Laurence, the successor of Augustine and his brother missionaries, to the Irish bishops or abbots. In this Exhortatory Epistle, as Bede styles it, Laurence expresses the disappointment felt by himself and his fellow bishops on finding that the Scots, equally with the Britons, had departed from the universal custom of the church. The warmth with which the dispute was, at this time, entered into by some of the clergy of Ireland, appears, from a circumstance mentioned in this letter, of an Irish bishop, Dagan, who, on visiting the Roman missionaries, refused not only to eat in company with them, but even under the same roof.

A. D. 630. From this period the question seems to have been left open for more than twenty years: some few among

* Thus, in the letter of the clergy of Rome, cited by Bede (l. ii. c. 19.), —Reperimus quosdam provinciæ vestræ, contra orthodoxam fidem, novam ex veteri hæresim renovare conantes, Pascha nostrum in quo immolatus est Christus nebulosa caligine refutantes, et quartodecima luna cum Hebræis celebrare nitentes." Either ignorantly or wilfully Dr. Ledwich has fallen into the same misrepresentation, and, unmindful of the important difference above stated, accuses the Irish church, at this period, of quartodecimanism.

the clergy of Ireland being not unwilling, as it seems, to adopt the new Roman discipline; while others thought it sufficient to conform so far to Rome as to substitute the 16th day of the moon, in their Paschal Canon, for the 14th; and the great bulk of the clergy and people continued attached to their old traditional mode. At length, the attention of the Roman See was, in the year 630, drawn to the dispute; and a letter was addressed by Honorius to the nation of the Scots, in which he earnestly exhorts them "not to consider their own small number, placed in the utmost borders of the earth, as wiser than all the ancient and modern Churches of Christ throughout the world; nor to continue to celebrate an Easter contrary to the Paschal calculation, and to the synodal decrees of all the bishops upon earth." In consequence of this admonitory letter, a Synod was held in Campo-lene, near Old Leighlin, where it was agreed, after some strenuous opposition from St. Fintan Munnu, of Taghmon, that Easter should, in future, be celebrated at the same time with the universal church. This decree, however, having been rendered abortive by some subsequent intrigue, it was resolved by the elders of the church, that, in pursuance of an ancient canon, by which it was directed that every important ecclesiastical affair should be referred to the Head of Cities, some wise and humble persons should be, on the present occasion, sent to Rome, "as children to their mother." A deputation was accordingly despatched to that city, who, on their return within three years after, declared that they had seen, in the see of St. Peter, the Greek, the Hebrew, the Scythian, A. D. and the Egyptian, all celebrating the same Easter Day, 633. in common with the whole catholic world, and differing from that of the Irish by an entire month.* In con-

* Misimus quos novimus sapientes et humiles esse, velut natos ad matrem; et prosperum iter in voluntate Dei habentes, et ad Romam urbem aliqui ex eis venientes, tertio anno ad nos usque pervenerunt; et sic omnia viderunt sicut audierunt: sed et valde certiora, utpote visa quam audita invenerunt; et in uno hospitio cum Græco et Hebræo, Scythâ et Ægyptiaco, in Ecclesia sancti Petri simul in Paschâ (in quo mense integro disjuncti sumus) fuerunt." — *Epist. Cummian. Hibern. ad Segienum Huensem, Abbat. de Controvers. Paschal.* See Usher's Vet. Epist. Hibernic. Syllog.

sequence of this report of the deputies, which must have been received about the year 633, the new Roman cycle and rules were, from that period, universally adopted throughout the southern division of Ireland.

However disproportioned to the amount of discussion which it occasioned was the real importance of the point of discipline now at issue, the effects of the controversy, in as far as it promoted scientific enquiry, and afforded a stimulant to the wits of the disputants, on both sides, could not be otherwise than highly favourable to the advancement of the public mind. The reference to the usages of other countries to which it accustomed the Irish scholars tended, in itself, to enlarge the sphere of their observation and proportionally liberalise their views; nor was it possible to engage in the discussion of a question so closely connected both with astronomy and arithmetic, without some proficiency in those branches of knowledge by which alone it could be properly sifted or judged. Accordingly, while, on one side of the dispute, St. Columbanus supported eloquently the cause of his countrymen, abroad, adducing, in defence of their practice, no less learned authority than that of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea; at home, another ingenious Irishman, St. Cummian, still more versed in the studies connected with this subject, produced, on the Roman side of the question, such an array of learning and proofs as would, in any age, have entitled his performance to respect, if not admiration. Enforcing the great argument derived from the unity of the church *, which he supports by the authority of all the most ancient fathers, Greek as well as Latin, he passes in review the various cyclical systems that had previously been in use, pointing out their construction and defects, and showing himself acquainted with the chronological characters, both natural and artificial. The various learning, indeed, which this curious tract displays, implies such a facility

* Quid autem pravius sentiri potest de Ecclesia matre quam si dicamus, Roma errat, Hierosolyma errat, Alexandria errat, Antiochia errat, totus mundus errat: soli tantum Scoti et Britones rectum sapiunt. — *Epist. Cummian.*

and range of access to books as proves the libraries of the Irish students, at that period, to have been, for the times in which they lived, extraordinarily well furnished.

This eminent man, St. Cummian, who had been one of those most active and instrumental in procuring the adoption of the Roman system by the Irish of the south, had thereby incurred the serious displeasure of the Abbot and Monks of Hy, under whose jurisdiction, as a monk of their order, he was placed, and who continued longer than any other of their monastic brethren to adhere to the old Irish method, in consequence of its having been observed by their venerable founder, St. Columba. In defence of himself and those who agreed with him in opinion, St. Cummian wrote the famous treatise just alluded to, in the form of an Epistle addressed to Segienus, abbot of Hy; and the learning, ability, and industry with which he has executed his task, must, even by those most inclined to sneer at the literature of that period, be regarded as highly remarkable.

Though the southern half of Ireland had now received the new Roman method, the question continued to be still agitated in the northern division, where a great portion of the clergy persisted in the old Irish rule; and to the influence exercised over that part of the kingdom by the successors of St. Columba this perseverance is, in a great measure, to be attributed. It is worthy of remark, however, that notwithstanding the intense eagerness of the contest, not merely in Ireland, but wherever, in Britain, the Irish clergy preached, a spirit of fairness and tolerance was mutually exercised by both parties; nor was the schism of any of those venerable persons who continued to oppose themselves to the Roman system allowed to interfere with or at all diminish the reverence which their general character for sanctity inspired. Among other instances of this tolerant spirit may be mentioned the tribute of respect paid publicly to St. Fintin Munnu, by his zealous adversary, Laserian, in the course of their contest respecting

the new Paschal rule. A yet more historical instance is presented in the case of Aidan, the great apostle of the Northumbrians, who, though a strenuous opponent of the Roman Paschal system, continued to be honoured no less in life and after death, by even those persons who had the most vehemently differed with him.

The connection of this venerable Irishman, St. Aidan, with the Anglo-Saxon king Oswald, illustrates too aptly the mutual relations of their respective countries, at this period, to be passed over without some particular notice. During the reign of his uncle Edwin, the young Oswald had lived, an exile, in Ireland, and having been instructed, while there, in the doctrines of Christianity, resolved, on his accession to the throne, to disseminate the same blessing among his subjects. With this view he applied to the Elders of the Scots, among whom he had himself been taught, desiring that they would furnish him with a bishop, through whose instruction and ministry the nation of the English he had been called to govern might receive the Christian faith. In compliance with the royal desire, a monk of Hy, named Aidan, was sent; to whom, on his arrival, the king gave, as the seat of his see, the small island of Lindisfarne, or, as it has been since called, Holy Isle. In the spiritual labours of the Saint's mission the pious Oswald took constantly a share; and it was often, says Bede, a delightful spectacle to witness, that when the bishop, who knew but imperfectly the English tongue, preached the truths of the Gospel, the king himself, who had become master of the Scotic language during his long banishment in Ireland, acted as interpreter of the word of God to his commanders and ministers.* From that time, continues the same authority, numbers of Scotish, or Irish, poured daily into Britain, preaching the faith, and administering baptism through all the provinces over which king Oswald reigned. In

* Ubi pulcherrimo sæpe spectaculo contigit, ut evangelizante antistite, qui Anglorum linguam perfectè non noverat, ipse Rex suis ducibus ac ministris interpres verbi existeret cœlestis, quia nimirum tam longo exilii sui tempore linguam Scotorum jam plene didicerat. — Lib. iii. cap. 3.

every direction churches were erected, to which the people flocked with joy to hear the word. Possessions were granted, by royal bounty, for the endowment of monasteries and schools, and the English, old and young, were instructed by their Irish masters in all religious observances.*

Having now allowed so long a period of Irish history to elapse, without any reference whatever to the civil transactions of the country, it may naturally be expected that I should for a while digress from ecclesiastical topics, and, leaving the lives of ascetic students and the dull controversies of the cloister, seek relief from the tame and monotonous level of such details in the stirring achievements of the camp, the feuds of rival chieftains, or even in the pomps and follies of a barbaric court. But the truth is, there exist in the Irish annals no materials for such digression, — the Church forming, throughout these records, not merely, as in the history of most other countries, a branch or episode of the narrative, but its sole object and theme. In so far, indeed, as a quick succession of kings may be thought to enliven history, there occurs no want of such variety in the annals of Ireland; the lists of her kings, throughout the whole course of the Milesian monarchy, exhibiting but too strongly that unerring mark of a low state of civilisation. The time of duration allowed by Newton, in his Chronology, to the reigns of monarchs in settled and civilised kingdoms is, at a medium, as much as

* Exin' cœpere plures per dies de Scotorum regione venire Britanniam atque illis Anglorum provinciis, quibus regnavit rex Osvald, magna devotione verbum Dei prædicare. —*Bede*, lib. iii. cap. 3. "As these preachers (says Dr. Lanigan) came over from *the land of the Scots to Britain*, it is plain that they came from Ireland: for the land of the British Scots was itself in Britain; and accordingly Lloyd states, (chap. v. § 5.) that these auxiliaries of Aidan 'came out of Ireland.' Thus also Fleury (lib. xxxviii. § 19.) calls them 'Missionaires Irlandois.'" — *Ecclesiast. Hist.* chap. xv. note 103.

It was hardly worthy of Doctor Lingard's known character for fairness, to follow the example so far of Dempster, and other such writers, as to call our eminent Irish missionaries, at this period, by the ambiguous name of Scotish monks, without at the same time informing his readers that these distinguished men were Scots of Ireland. The care with which the ecclesiastical historians of France and Italy have in general marked this distinction, is creditable alike to their fairness and their accuracy.

eighteen years for each reign. In small, uncivilised kingdoms, however, the medium allowed is not more than ten or eleven years; and at this average were the reigns of the kings of Northumbria under the Saxon heptarchy.* What then must be our estimate of the political state of Ireland at this period, when we find that, from the beginning of the reign of Tuathal, A. D. 533, to the time of the great plague, 664, no less than fifteen monarchs had successively filled the Irish throne, making the average of their reigns, during that period, little more than eight years each. With the names of such of these princes as wielded the sceptre since my last notice of the succession, which brought its series down to A. D. 599, it is altogether unnecessary to encumber these pages; not one of them having left more than a mere name behind, and, in general, the record of their violent deaths being the only memorial that tells of their ever having lived.

In order to convey to the reader any adequate notion of the apostolical labours of that crowd of learned missionaries whom Ireland sent forth, in the course of this century, to all parts of Europe, it would be necessary to transport him to the scenes of their respective missions; to point out the difficulties they had to encounter, and the admirable patience and courage with which they surmounted them; to show how inestimable was the service they rendered, during that dark period, by keeping the dying embers of learning awake, and how gratefully their names are enshrined in the records of foreign lands, though but faintly, if at all, remembered in their own. It was, indeed, then, as it has been ever since, the peculiar fate of Ireland, that both in talent, and the fame that honourably rewards it, her sons prospered far more triumphantly abroad than at home; for while, of the many

* To judge from the following picture, however, their state was little better than that of the Irish: — "During the last century (the eighth) Northumbria had exhibited successive instances of treachery and murder to which no other country perhaps can furnish a parallel. Within the lapse of a hundred years, fourteen kings had assumed the sceptre, and yet of all these one only, if one, died in the peaceable possession of royalty: seven had been slain, six had been driven from the throne by their rebellious subjects."

who confined their labours to their native land, but few have left those remembrances behind which constitute fame, those who carried the light of their talent and zeal to other lands, not only founded a lasting name for themselves, but made their country also a partaker of their renown, winning for her that noble title of the Island of the Holy and the Learned, which, throughout the night that overhung all the rest of Europe, she so long and proudly wore. Thus, the labours of the great missionary, St. Columbanus, were, after his death, still vigorously carried on, both in France and Italy, by those disciples who had accompanied or joined him from Ireland; and his favourite Gallus, to whom, in dying, he bequeathed his pastoral staff, became the founder of an abbey in Switzerland, which was in the thirteenth century erected into a princedom, while the territory belonging to it has, through all changes, borne the name of St. Gall.* From his great assiduity in promulgating the Gospel, and training up disciples capable of succeeding him in the task, this pious Irishman has been called, by a foreign martyrologist, the Apostle of the Allemanian nation. Another disciple and countryman of St. Columbanus, named Deicola, or in Irish Dichuill, enjoyed, like his master, the patronage and friendship of the monarch Clotaire II., who endowed the monastic establishment formed by him at Luthra, with considerable grants of land.

* In speaking of the learning displayed by St. Cummian in his famous Letter on the Paschal question, I took occasion to remark on the proof which it affords of the existence of libraries, at that period, in Ireland, and by no means ill or scantily furnished. From a circumstance mentioned by the ecclesiastical historians of an Irish bishop, named Mark, who visited the monastery of St. Gall, about the middle of the ninth century, it would appear that the Irish were, at that time, even able to contribute to the libraries of their fellow countrymen on the Continent. The fact is thus stated by the Benedictines: — Il s'y vient alors habituer un évêque Hibernois nommé Marc, dont la rétraite fut avantageuse aux études, tant par les livres dont il augmenta la bibliothèque que par les personnes qu'il avoit à sa suite. Entre ceux-ci étoit un neveu, à qui le nom barbare de Moengal fut changé en celui de Marcel, et un Eusebe, autre homme de lettres, et Hibernois, comme les précédens." The learned writers then add the following interesting remark respecting the Irish of that period in general:— "On a déja remarqué ailleurs que les gens de ce pays, presqu'à l'extrémité du monde, avoient mieux conservé la littérature, parcequ'ils étoient moins exposés aux revolutions que les autres parties de l'Europe."

In various other parts of France, similar memorials of Irish sanctity may be traced.* At the celebrated monastery of Centula, in Ponthieu, was seen a tomb, engraved with golden letters, telling that there lay the remains of the venerable priest, Caidoc, "to whom A. D. 650. Ireland gave birth, and the Gallic land a grave."† The site of the hermitage of St. Fiacre, another Irish saint, was deemed so consecrated a spot, that to go on a pilgrimage thither was, to a late period, a frequent practice among the devout; and we are told of the pious Anne of Austria, that when, in 1641, she visited the shrine of this saint, so great was the humility of her devotion, that she went the whole of the way, from Monceau to the town of Fiacre, on foot.‡ Among the number of holy and eminent Irishmen who thus extended their labours to France, must not be forgotten St. Fursa§, who, after preaching among the East Angles, and converting many from Paganism, passed

* Ce commerce de littérature entre les Gaules et les Iles Britanniques, en genre de s'entrecommuniquer leurs connoissances sur les lettres et la doctrine, et de se prêter de grands hommes pour les répandre, devint mutuel depuis que S. Gildas, S. Colomban, et plusieurs autres Hibernois, presque tous gens de lettres, se retirèrent dans nos provinces.—*Hist. Littér. de la France*, tom. iv.

† Mole sub hac tegitur Caidocus jure sacerdos,
Scotia quem genuit, Gallica terra tegit.

The burial-place of this saint, who died at Centula, towards the middle of the seventh century, was repaired by Angilbert, abbot of that monastery, in the reign of Charlemagne, when the epitaph from which the above couplet is cited was inscribed upon the tomb.

‡ L'ermitage de Saint Fiacre est devenu un bourg de la Brie, fameux par les pélérinages que l'on y faisait; l'église ou chapelle étoit desservie par les Bénédictins; les femmes n'entroient point dans le sanctuaire, et l'on remarqueque la Reine Anne d'Autriche, y venant en pélérinage en 1641, se conforma à cet usage, et qu'elle fit même à pied le chemin depuis Monceau jusqu'à Saint-Fiacre."—*Hist. de Meaux.*

It is said in another work, relating to this saint, "On a prétendu que le nom de Fiacres avoit été donné aux carosses de place, parcequ'ils furent d'abord destinés à voiturer jusqu'à St. Fiacre (en Brie) les Parisiens qui y allerent en pélérinage."

§ This saint was of royal descent:—"Erat autem vir ille de nobilissimo genere Scotorum."—*Bede*, l. iii. c. 19. In the same chapter will be found an account of those curious visions or revelations of St. Fursa, which are supposed by the Benedictines to have been intended to shadow forth the political and moral corruption of the higher orders in Ireland:—"On s'apperçoit sans peine qu'elles tendent à réprimer les désordres qui régnoient alors parmi les Princes, les Evêques, et les autres ecclésiastiques d'Hibernie, où le saint les avoit eues. Elles taxent principalement leur avarice, leur oisiveté, le peu de soin qu'ils prenoient de s'instruire et d'instruire les autres."

over into France; and, building a monastery at Lagny, near the river Marne, remained there, spreading around him the blessings of religious instruction, till his death.

In like manner, through most of the other countries of Europe, we hear of the progress of some of these adventurous spirits, and track the course of their fertilising footsteps through the wide waste of ignorance and paganism which then prevailed.* In Brabant, the brothers of St. Fursa, Ultan and Foillan, founded an establishment which was long called the Monastery of the Irish; and the elegant scholar, St. Livin †, whom, by his own verses, we trace to the tomb of St. Bavo ‡, in Ghent, proceeded from thence, on a spiritual mission, through Flanders and Brabant, prepared at every step for that crown of martyrdom, which at length, from the hands of Pagans, he suffered.§ With the same

* "In the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries (says Macpherson), religion and learning flourished in Ireland to such a degree, that it was commonly styled the mother country of saints, and reputed the kingdom of arts and sciences. The Saxons and Angles sent thither many of their princes and princesses to have the benefit of a pious and learned education. It ought, likewise, to be acknowledged, that some of the most eminent teachers of North Britain received their instruction at the Irish seminaries of literature and religion."

† "Voici encore un écrivain," say the Benedictines, "que la France est en droit de partager avec l'Hibernie, qui lui donna naissance."

‡ The epitaph which this saint wrote upon St. Bavo, and the epistle addressed by him to his friend Florbert, in sending him the epitaph, may both be found in Usher's Vet. Epist. Hiberniarum Sylloge. Of these two poems Dr. Lanigan remarks, that they "are very neat compositions, and do great honour to the classical taste of the Irish schools of that period, while barbarism prevailed in the greatest part of Western Europe."—Chap. vi. § 12.

§ In his epistle to Florbert, the Saint thus anticipates the doom of martyrdom that awaited him:—

Impia Barbarico gens exagitata tumultu
Hic Brabanta furit, meque cruenta petit.
Quid tibi peccavi, qui pacis nuntia porto?
Pax est quod porto; cur mihi bella moves?
Sed quâ tu spiras feritas sors læta triumphi,
Atque dabit palmam gloria martyrii.

The following verses from this epistle, in reference to the task which his friend Florbert had imposed upon him, may not, perhaps, be thought unworthy of citation:

Et pius ille pater cum donis mollia verba
Mittit, et ad studium sollicitat precibus.
Ac titulo magnum jubet insignire *Bavonem*;
Atq' leves elegos esse decus tumulo.
Nec reputat, fisso cùm stridet fistula ligno,
Quod soleat raucum reddere quassa sonum.
Exigui rivi pauper quam vena ministrat
Lasso vix tenues unda ministra opem.

enterprising spirit we find St. Fridolin, surnamed the Traveller,—a native, it is supposed, of Connaught,—exploring the Rhine for some uninhabited island, and at length fixing himself upon Seckingen, where he founded a church, and a religious house for females, which he lived to see prosper under his own eyes. Next to the generous self-devotion of these holy adventurers, thus traversing alone the land of the infidel and the stranger, the feeling of gratitude with which after-ages have clung to their names, forms one of the most pleasing topics of reflection which history affords; and few, if any, of our Irish missionaries left behind them more grateful recollections than, for centuries, consecrated every step of the course of Fridolin the Traveller, through Lorraine, Alsace, Germany, and Switzerland.

In the month of May, 664, that solar eclipse took place, the accurate record of which by the Irish chroniclers, I have already had occasion to notice. This phenomenon, together with the singular aspect of the sky, which, during the whole summer, as we are told, seemed to be on fire, was regarded generally, at the time, as foretokening some fatal calamity; and the frightful pestilence which immediately after broke out, both in England and Ireland, seemed but too fully to justify the superstitious fear. This Yellow Plague, as the dreadful malady was called, having made its appearance first on the southern coasts of Britain, spread from thence to Northumbria, and, about the beginning of August, reached Ireland, where, in the course of the three years during which its ravages lasted, it is com-
A. D. puted to have swept off two thirds of the inhabitants.
664. Among its earliest victims were the two royal brothers,

Sic ego, qui quondam studio florente videbar
Esse poëta, modò curro pedester equo.
Et qui Castalio dicebar fonte madentem
Dictæo versu posse movere Lyram,
Carmine nunc lacero dictant mihi verba Camœnæ;
Mensq'ue dolens lætis apta nec est modulis.
Non sum qui fueram festivo carmine lætus:
Qualiter esse queam, tela cruenta videns?

Diermit and Blathmac, who held jointly at this period the Irish throne; and Bede mentions also, in the number of sufferers, some natives of England, both noble and of lower rank, who had retired to Ireland, as he expresses it, "to pursue a course of sacred studies, and lead a stricter life." It is in mentioning this interesting fact, that the historian adds, so honourably to the Irish, that they most cheerfully received all these strangers, and supplied them gratuitously with food, with books, and instruction.*

While thus from England such numbers crowded to these shores, and either attached themselves to a monastic life, or visited the cells of the different monasteries in pursuit of general knowledge, Irish scholars were, with a similar view, invited into Britain. The Island of Hy, which was inhabited by Irish monks, furnished teachers to all the more northern regions; and the appointment of three natives of Ireland, in succession, to the new see of Lindisfarne, proves how grateful a sense of the services of that nation the Northumbrian princes of this period entertained. At the time we are speaking of, the bishop of this see was Colman, a monk of the Columbian order, who had been sent from Ireland for the purpose of filling that high dignity. Like all the rest of the clergy of his order, he adhered to the Irish mode of celebrating Easter, and the dispute respecting that point received a new recruitment of force from his accession, as well as from the scruples of the intelligent Alchfrid, son of king Oswin, who, while his father, a convert and pupil of the Irish, "saw nothing better," says Bede, "than what they taught," was inclined to prefer to their traditions the canonical practice now introduced from Rome.† In

* On this Ledwich remarks, "So zealous and disinterested a love of learning is unparalleled in the annals of the world."

† An edifying instance of the tolerance of that period is afforded in the following fact, mentioned by Bede: — The queen Eanfled, who had lived in Kent, and who had with her a Kentish priest, named Romanus, followed the Roman Easter, while the king Oswin celebrated the Irish Easter; and it sometimes happened, says Bede, that while the king, bishop, &c. were enjoying the Paschal festivity, the queen and her followers were still fasting the Lent.

consequence of the discussions to which this difference gave rise, a memorable conference was held on the subject, at Whitby; where, in the presence of the two kings, Oswin and Alchfrid, the arguments of each party were temperately and learnedly brought forward; the bishop Colman, with his Irish clergy, speaking in defence of the old observances of their country, while Wilfrid, a learned priest, who had been recently to Rome, undertook to prove the truth and universality of the Roman method. The scene of the controversy was in a monastery, or nunnery, over which Hilda, a distinguished abbess, presided, — herself and all her community being favourers, we are told, of the Irish system. The debate was carried on in Irish and Anglo-Saxon, the venerable Cead, an English bishop, acting as interpreter between the parties; and the whole proceeding but wanted a worthier or more important subject of discussion to render it, in no ordinary degree, striking and interesting.*

After speeches and replies on both sides, of which Bede has preserved the substance, the king and the assembly at large agreed to give their decision in favour of Wilfrid; and Colman, silenced but not convinced, resolving still to adhere to the tradition of his fathers, resigned the see of Lindisfarne, and returned to his home in Ireland, taking along with him all the Irish monks, and about thirty of the English, belonging to that establishment.†

* Among other persons present at the discussion was Agilbert, a native of France, who, for the sake of studying the Scriptures, as Bede tells us, had passed a considerable time in Ireland. "Venit in provinciam de Hibernia pontifex quidam, nomine Agilberctus, natione quidem Gallus, sed tunc legendarum gratia Scripturarum in Hibernia non parvo tempore demoratus."—Lib. iii. c. 7.

† To the monastery built by Colman for his English followers, at Mayo, (Bede, l. iv. c. 4.), a number of other monks of that nation attached themselves; and, in the time of Adamnan, towards the close of the seventh century, there were about one hundred Saxon or English saints at that place, which from thence was called by the name of *Maigh-eona Sasson*, or Mayo of the English. For this fact, Usher refers to the book of Ballimote: — Quo in loco, uti Bedæ ælate grande Anglorum fuisse monasterium audivimus, ita etiam S. Cormaci, et Adamnani tempore *centum Saxonicorum Sanctorum* fuisse habitaculum, libri Ballimotensis collector confirmat."— *Eccles. Primord.*

The great mistake which pervaded the arguments of the Roman party, upon this question, lay in their assumption — whether wilfully or from ignorance — that the method of computation which they had introduced was the same that Rome had practised from the very commencement of her church; whereas, it was not till the middle of the fifth century that the Romans themselves were induced, for the sake of peace and unity, to exchange their old cycle of eighty-four years for a new Paschal system. By another gross error of the same party, which seems also liable to the suspicion of having been wilful, the Easter of the Irish was confounded with the Quartodeciman Pasch, though between the two observances, as we have already seen, there was an essential difference.* But the fundamental error of both parties in the contest, was, the importance attached unduly by each of them to a point of mere astronomical calculation, unconnected with either faith or morals; and while the Irish were, no doubt, censurable for persisting with so much obstinacy in a practice which, besides being indifferent in itself, was at variance with the general usage of Christendom, their opponents were no less to be blamed for their want of charity and good sense in raising, on so slight a point of difference and discipline, the cry of heresy and schism.

A dispute of a still more trifling nature, and bordering closely, it must be owned, on the ridiculous, was, by the English followers of the Roman missionaries, mixed up, throughout, with the Paschal question, and, in a subordinate degree, made to share its fortunes. This dispute related to the tonsure, or mode of shaving the head, practised respectively by the Roman and Irish clergy: the former of whom shaved or clipped the crown of the head, leaving the hair to grow in a circle all round it; while the Irish, allowing the hair to cover the

* Inheriting fully the same perverse feeling against the Irish, Dr. Ledwich has, in the same manner, misrepresented them on this subject; endeavouring to make out that St. Columba and his successors were all Quartodecimans. See an able refutation of his views, on this point, by Dr. Lanigan, chap. xii. note 236.

back of the head, shaved or clipped it away, in the form of a crescent, from the front. Both parties, with equal confidence and, it may be added, ignorance, appealed to antiquity in support of their respective tonsures; while, on the part of the Irish, the real motive for clinging so fondly to their old custom was, that it had been introduced among them, with all their other ecclesiastical rules and usages, by the national apostle, St. Patrick. According as their Paschal rule, however, gave way, this form of the tonsure followed its fate; and in a Canon, the date of which is supposed to be about the seventh or eighth century, we find an order for the observance of the Roman tonsure.

However constantly the kings of Ireland, at this period, were, as her annals record, in conflict with each other, that perfect security from foreign invasion which she had through so long a course of ages enjoyed, still continued to be inviolate. A slight interruption, however, of this course of good fortune, — as if to break the spell hitherto guarding her, — occurred towards the close of this century, when, notwithstanding the habitual relations of amity between the Northumbrians and the Irish, an expedition, commanded by the general of Egfrid, king of Northumberland, landed on the eastern coast of Ireland, and ravaging the whole of the territory, at that time called Bregia, spared, as the annals tell us, neither people nor clergy, and carried off with them a number of captives, as well as considerable plunder. This sudden and, apparently, wanton aggression, is supposed to have been owing to the offence taken by Egfrid at the protection afforded by the Irish to his brother, Alfrid, who was then an exile in their country.* Availing himself of the leisure which his period of banishment afforded,

A. D. 684.

* On account of his illegitimacy, Alfrid had been set aside by some of the nobles, and his younger brother Egfrid exalted to the throne. "Is (Alfridus), quia nothus, ut dixi, erat factione optimatum, quamvis senior, regno indignus et æstimatus, in Hiberniam, seu vi, seu indignatione secesserat. Ita ab odio germani tutus, et magno otio literis imbutus, omni philosophia animum composuerat." — *Guliclm. Malmsbur. De Gest. Reg.* lib. i. c. 3.

this intelligent prince had become a proficient in all the studies of his age: nor was he the only royal foreigner who, in those times, found a shelter in Ireland, as Dagobert, the son of the king of Austrasia, had, not long before, been educated there in a monastery; and, after a seclusion of many years, being recalled from thence to his own country, became sovereign of all Austrasia, under the title of Dagobert II.

The very year after his piratical attack on the Irish coast, king Egfrid, by a just judgment upon him, as Bede appears to think, for this wanton aggression on "a harmless nation, which had been always most friendly to the English *," was, in a rash invasion of the Pictish territory, defeated and slain; and his brother Alfrid, though illegitimate, succeeded to the throne.† With the view of seeking restitution, both of the property and the captives, which had been carried away in the marauding expedition under Egfrid, Adamnan, the abbot of Hy, was sent to the court of the new king, whose warm attachment and gratitude to Ireland, as well as his personal friendship for her legate, could not fail to insure perfect success to the mission; and accordingly we find, in the annals of the year 684, a record of the return of Adamnan, bringing back with him from Northumbria sixty captives.‡ This able and learned man was descended from the same royal line with his predecessor, St. Columba, namely, the race of the northern Nials, which, from the first foundation of Hy, furnished, for more than two centuries, almost all its abbots. So constant did the Irish remain to one line of descent, as well in their abbots as their kings.

It was during this or a subsequent visit to his royal friend that Adamnan, observing the practice of the English churches, was induced to adopt the Roman

* Vastavit misere gentem innoxiam et nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam. — Lib. iv. c. 26.

† He ably retrieved, too, as Bede informs us, the ruined state of that kingdom. How much this prince had profited by his studies in Ireland, appears from what the same historian states of him, that "ne was most learned in the Scriptures,"—"vir in scripturis doctissimus."—Lib. iv. c. 26.

‡ Annal. IV. Mag.

Paschal system; as well as to employ, on his return home, all the influence he possessed with his countrymen, in persuading them to follow his example. In those parts of Ireland which were exempt from the jurisdiction of Hy, his success appears to have been considerable; but neither in that monastery, nor any of those dependent upon it, could their eminent abbot succeed in winning over converts. Among the writings left by Adamnan, the most generally known is his Life of St. Columba, — a work, of which a fastidious Scotch critic has pronounced, that "it is the most complete piece of such biography that all Europe can boast of, not only at so early a period, but even through the whole Middle Ages."*

In the annals of the reign of the monarch Finnachtha, which lasted from the year 674 to 693, we meet with one of the few records of civil transactions, which the monkish chroniclers have deigned to transmit; nor even in this instance, perhaps, should we have been furnished with any knowledge of the fact, had it not been so closely connected with the ascendancy and glory of the church. The Boarian tribute, that iniquitous tax upon the people of Leinster, which had now, through forty successive reigns, been one of the most fertile of all the many sources of national strife, was at length, at the urgent request of St. Moling, archbishop of Ferns, remitted by the pious king Finnactha, for himself and his successors, for ever.

Towards the close of this century, we again find the page of Irish history illuminated by a rich store of saintly ornaments. It is highly probable that, on the return of prince Dagobert to Austrasia, he had been accompanied or followed thither from Ireland by some of those eminent scholars who had, during his stay there, presided over his studies; as we find him, on his subsequent accession to the throne, extending his notice and patronage to two distinguished natives of Ireland, St. Arbogast † and St. Florentius, the former of whom

* Pinkerton, Enquiry, &c.

† Arbogastus, origine Scotus. — *Mabillon.*

having resided, for some time, in retirement at Alsace, was, by Dagobert, when he became king, appointed bishop of Strasburg; and, on his death, a few years after, his friend and countryman, Florentius, became his successor. The tombs of two brothers, Erard* and Albert, both distinguished Irish saints of this period, were long shown at Ratisbon; and St. Wiro, who is said to have been a native of the county of Clare†, rose to such eminence by his sanctity, that Pepin of Heristal, the mighty ruler and father of kings, selected him for his spiritual director, and was accustomed, we are told, to confess to him barefoot.

But one of the most celebrated of the Irish missionaries of this period, was the great apostle of Franconia, St. Kilian, who, to his other triumphs and glories in the cause of religion, added finally that of martyrdom. His illustrious convert, the duke of Wurtzburg, whose conversion was followed by that of numbers of his subjects, having contracted a marriage with the wife of his brother, St. Kilian pointed out to him the unlawfulness of such a connection, and required, as a proof of his sense of religion, that he should dissolve it. The Duke, confessing this to be the most difficult of all the trials imposed upon him, yet added that, having already sacrificed so much for the love of God, he would also give up Geilana, notwithstanding that she was so dear to him, as soon as a military expedition, on which he was then summoned, should be at an end. On being informed, after his departure, of what had passed, Geilana determined to take her revenge; and, seizing the opportunity when St. Kilian, accompanied by two of his brethren, was employed in chanting the midnight service, she sent an assassin, with orders to put them all to death. As the

* There has been some doubt as to the claims of Ireland to this saint; but Bollandus, after much consideration on the subject, declares it to be the most probable opinion that he was an Irishman. See the point discussed by Dr. Lanigan, chap. xviii. note 95.

† "Dr. Lingard says (*Anglo-Saxon Church*, chap. xiii. note 12.), that Alcuin, in the poem *de Pont. Ebor.* v. 1045., calls Wiro an Anglo-Saxon. Now, in the said poem, which, by-the-bye, was not written by Alcuin, there is not a word about Wiro at that verse, nor, as far as I can find, in any other part of it."—*Lanigan*, chap. xviii. note 105.

saint had exhorted them to receive calmly the wished-for crown of martyrdom, no resistance was made by any of the party, and they were, one by one, quietly beheaded. On the same night, their remains were hastily deposited in the earth, together with their clothes and pontifical ornaments, the sacred books and cross; and were, many years after, discovered by St. Burchard, bishop of Wurtzburg. Of the impious Geilana we are told, that she was seized with an evil spirit, which so grievously tormented her that she soon after died; and, to this day, St. Kilian is honoured as Wurtzburg's patron saint.

To this period it seems most reasonable to refer the patron saint of Tarentum, Cataldus, of whose acts more has been written, and less with certainty known, than of any other of the great ornaments of Irish church history.* His connection with the celebrated school of Lismore, which was not founded till about the year 663, places him, at least, towards the conclusion of the seventh century, if not at the beginning of the eighth; it being evident, from the mention of Lismore, in some of the numerous poems dedicated to his praise, that the fame of that school had, at the time when he flourished, already extended itself to foreign lands.†

* See for a long account of this saint Usher's *De Brit. Eccles. Primord.* 751. et seq. From a Life of Cataldus, in verse, by Bonaventura Moronus, Usher cites some opening lines, of which the following are a specimen: —

> "Oceani Divum Hesperii Phœbique cadentis
> Immortale decus, nulli pietate secundum,
> Prisca Phalantæi celebrant quem jura Senatus,
> Externisque dolet mitti glacialis Iberne,
> Musa, refer."

The place of his birth was thus announced, we are told, in song, in the ancient churches of Tarentum:

> "Gaude, felix Hibernia, de qua proles alma progreditur:"

and again, in this rhyming epitaph:

> "Felix Hibernia, sed magis Tarentum,
> Quæ claudis in tumulo magnum talentum."

Usher has amply exposed in this, as in numerous other instances, the impudent pretences on which the notorious Dempster has laid claim to our Irish saints, as natives of Scotland.

† In a passage too long to be given entire, Bonaventura Moronus has described the multitudes of foreign scholars that flocked, from every part

In the eighth century, indeed, the high reputation of the Irish for scholarship had become established throughout Europe; and that mode of applying the learning and subtlety of the schools to the illustration of theology, which assumed, at a later period, a more systematic form, under the name of the Scholastic Philosophy, is allowed to have originated among the eminent divines whom the monasteries of Ireland, in the course of this century, poured forth. Of the dialectical powers of these theologians we are furnished with one remarkable specimen, in a sort of syllogistic argument used by them on the subject of the Trinity, which, however heterodox may seem its tendency, by no means merits the charge of sophistry brought against it; as it but puts in a short, condensed form, the main difficulty of the doctrine, and marks clearly the two dangerous shoals of Tritheism and Sabellianism, between which the orthodox Trinitarian finds it so difficult to steer.*

As we approach the middle of the eighth century, the literary annals of the country present a much rarer display of eminent native names. But, however thinly scattered, they were the sole or chief lights of their time. Minds, in advance of the age they live in, have always received and deserved a double portion of fame; and

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of Europe, to the famous school at Lismore, where Cataldus had been educated.

> "Undique conveniunt proceres, quos dulce trahebat
> Discendi studium, major num cognita virtus,
> An laudata foret. . . . . .
> Certatim hi properant diverso framite ad urbem
> Lesmoriam, juvenis primos ubi transigit annos."

* "Apud modernos scholasticos maxime apud Scotos est syllogismus delusionis, ut dicunt, Trinitatem, sicut personarum, ita esse substantiarum." — *Letter of Benedict*, Abbot of Aniane, quoted by Mosheim, vol. ii. cent. viii. chap. 3. The object of the syllogism of those Irish scholastics is thus described by Benedict: — "Quatenus si adsenserit illectus auditor, Trinitatem esse trium substantiarum Deum, trium derogetur cultor Deorum: si autem abnuerit, personarum denegator culpetur:" — that is, as explained by Mosheim, "You must either affirm or deny that the three Persons in the Deity are three substances: if you affirm it, you are undoubtedly a Tritheist, and worship three Gods: if you deny it, this denial implies that they are not three distinct persons, and thus you fall into Sabellianism."

there is one distinguished Irishman of this period, whose name, from the darkness in which it shone out, will continue to be remembered when those of far more gifted men will have passed into oblivion.* Virgilius, whose real name is supposed to have been Feargil, or Feargal †, appeared first as a missionary abroad, about the year 746, when, arriving in France, he attracted the notice and friendship of Pepin, the father of Charlemagne, and became an inmate of his princely residence near Compiegne, on the Oise. From thence, after a stay of two years, he proceeded to Bavaria, bearing letters of introduction from his able patron to the duke Odilo, then ruler of that duchy. The great English missionary, Boniface, — the Apostle, as he is in general styled, of the Germans, — had been lately appointed to the new archbishopric of Mentz, and a difference of opinion on a point of theology, between him and Virgilius, who had been placed within the jurisdiction of his see, first brought them into collision with each other. Some ignorant priest having been in the habit of using bad Latin in administering baptism, St. Boniface, who chose to consider the ceremony thus performed to be invalid, ordered Virgilius, in some such cases that had occurred, to perform the baptism over again.‡ This the wiser abbot spiritedly refused, maintaining that the want of grammatical knowledge in the minister could not invalidate the efficacy of the ordinance. Confident, too, in the correctness of his opinion, he laid all the circumstances of the case before Pope Zachary, who immediately wrote to reprove the archbishop for the order which he had is-

* "Avant tous ces savants hommes, on avoit admiré en la personne de Virgile, Evêque de Saltzbourg et Apôtre de la Carinthie, de grandes connoissances, tant sur la Philosophie que sur la Théologie. Il est le premier que l'on sache qui ait découvert les Antipodes, ou l'autre monde." — *Hist. Littér. de la France*, tom. iv.

† "The Irish *Fear*, sometimes contracted into *Fer*, has in latinising of names been not seldom changed into *Vir*. For *Fear*, in Irish, signifies *man*, as *Vir* does in Latin. Thus an abbot of Hy, whose name is constantly written in Irish *Fergna*, is called by Adamnan *Virgnous*, through, as Colgan observes, a Latin inflection." — *Lanigan*, chap xix. note 127.

‡ In performing the ceremony of baptism, this priest used to say, "Baptizo te in nomine *Patria et Filia et Spiritua Sancta*," instead of "Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti." — *Epist. Zachar. Vet. Ep. Hibern. Sylloge.*

sued, and thus virtually gave his sanction to the opposition of Virgilius.

This triumph over him by an inferior seems to have rankled in the mind of Boniface, who from thenceforth sought opportunities of denouncing Virgilius to the pope, as guilty of various errors on points of catholic doctrine. Among these charges, the most serious, as may be concluded from the excitement which it produced, was that which accused the Irish abbot of maintaining that there "was another world, and other men, under the earth."* The fact was, that the acute mind of Virgilius had, from the knowledge acquired by him in the Irish schools, where geographical and philosophical studies were more cultivated than in other parts of the West, come to the conclusion that the earth was of a spherical figure, and that, by a necessary consequence, there were antipodes. This, as it proved upon inquiry, was the scientific doctrine which had been represented ignorantly to the pope, as a belief in another world below the earth, distinct from ours, inhabited by men, not of the race of Adam, nor included among those for whom Christ died.† It is by no means wonderful that, on such a representation, as well of the opinion as of the deductions from it, pope Zachary should regard it as an alarming heresy, and write, in answer to the archbishop, that, "should the charge be proved, a council must be convened, and the offender expelled from the church." As no record exists of any further proceedings upon the subject, we may take for granted that the accused abbot found means of clearing himself from the aspersion‡; and so little did this memorable charge of heresy stand in the way of his preferment, earthly or heavenly, that in a few years after he was made bishop

* "Quod alius mundus et alii homines sub terrâ sint, seu alius sol et luna."— *Bonifac. Epist. Bibliothec. Patrum.*

† The argument of Boniface was, that "Si essent antipodes, alii homines adeoque alius Christus introduceretur."

‡ "Disceptationis exitum non comperio. Fit verisimile aut purgasse se Virgilium Pontifici, sive coram, sive per litteras: aut, cognitis invidorum utriusque fraudibus . . . . . ultro, quod inter bonos solet, in gratiam esse reditum."— *Velser, Rerum Boiarum*, lib. v.

of Saltzburg, and in A. D. 1233, we find him canonised by pope Gregory IX.

Such are the real particulars of a transaction which it has been the object of many writers to misrepresent, for the purpose of flippantly accusing the church of Rome of a deliberate design to extinguish the light of science, and obstruct the progress of truth.* Were it even certain that this pope was slow to believe in the existence of antipodes, he would at least have erred in good company; as already the poet Lucretius had pronounced this belief to be inconsistent with reason †; while no less a church authority than St. Augustine had denounced it as contrary to the Scriptures.‡ But there is every reason to suppose, that pope Zachary, on the doctrine of Virgilius being explained to him, saw that it was an opinion to be at least tolerated, if not believed; and so far was the propounder of it from being, as is commonly stated, punished by losing his bishopric §, that it appears, on the contrary, to have been shortly after his promulgation of this doctrine that he was raised to the see of Saltzburg.

The life of this learned and active man, after his elevation to the see of Saltzburg, was marked by a succession of useful public acts; and the great Basilic, raised by him in honour of St. Rupert, attested at once the piety and magnificence of his nature. But the most lasting service rendered by him to the cause of religion, was the zealous part which he took in propagating the Gospel among the Carinthians. Two young princes of the reigning family of that province having been, at his request, baptized and educated as Christians, he found

* Among others, D'Alembert has founded on this supposed persecution of the Irish scholar, whom he honours so far as to connect his name with Galileo's, some strong charges against the tribunal of Rome, which, he says, "condamna un célèbre astronome pour avoir soutenu le mouvement de la terre, et le déclara hérétique; à-peu-près comme le pape Zacharie avoit condamné, quelques siècles auparavant, un Evêque, pour n'avoir pas pensé comme Saint Augustin sur les Antipodes, et pour avoir deviné leur existence six cens ans avant que Cristophe Columbe les découvrit."—*Discours Prélim. de l'Encyclopédie.*

† Lib. i. 1064. ‡ De Civitat. Dei, lib. xvi. c. 9.

§ Thus, Dr. Campbell, one of the most pretending and superficial of the writers on Irish affairs, speaks of "this great man as sentenced to degradation, upon his conviction of being a *Mathematician*, by pope Zachary, in the eighth century."—*Strictures on the Ecclesiast. and Lit. Hist. of Ireland.*

himself enabled, through their means, when they afterwards succeeded to power, so far to extend and establish the church already planted in their dominions, as fully to justify his claim to the title of the Apostle of Carinthia.

Under the auspices of the munificent Charlemagne, that country on whose shores the missionary and the scholar had never failed to meet with welcome and fame, had become a still more tempting asylum for the student and the exile; and among the learned of other lands who enjoyed that prince's patronage, those from Ireland were not the least conspicuous or deserving. The strange circumstances under which two itinerant Irish scholars, named Clement and Albinus, contrived to attract the emperor's notice, are thus related by a monkish chronicler of the time.* Arriving, in company with some British merchants, on the shores of France, these two Scots of Ireland, as they are designated by the chronicler, observing that the crowds who flocked around them on their arrival were eager only for saleable articles, could think of no other mode of drawing attention to themselves, than by crying out "Who wants wisdom? who wants wisdom? let him come to us, for we have it to sell." By continually repeating this cry, they soon succeeded in becoming objects of remark; and as they were found, upon nearer inquiry, to be no ordinary men, an account of them was forthwith transmitted to Charlemagne, who gave orders that they should be conducted into his presence. Their scheme or whim, whichsoever it might have been, was at once crowned with success; as the king, finding their pretensions to wisdom (as all the learning of that time was by courtesy called) to be not without foundation, placed Clement at the head of a seminary which he then established in France, and sent Albinus to preside over a similar institution at Pavia.† The historian Denina, remarking the fallen

* Monach. Sangall. de Gest. Carol.

† "On compte encore (say the Benedictines) entre les co-opérateurs de Charlemagne dans l'exécution de son grand dessein, un certain Clément, Hibernois de nation."—Tom. iv.

state of Italy at this period, when she was compelled, as he says, to look to the North and the extreme West for instructors, adds, as a striking proof of her reduced condition, that Irish monks were placed by Charlemagne at the head of some of her schools.*

Some doubts have been started as to the truth of this characteristic adventure of the two Irish scholars.† But, in addition to the evidence on which the story rests, and which is the same relied upon for most of the early life of Charlemagne, the incident is marked throughout with features so truly Irish — the dramatic humour of the expedient, the profession itself of an itinerant scholar, to a late period common in Ireland, — that there appear but slight grounds for doubting the authenticity of the anecdote. The vehement denial of its truth by Tiraboschi is actuated too evidently by offended national vanity, at the thought of an Irishman having been chosen to preside over a place of education in Italy, to be received with the deference his authority might otherwise command; and both Muratori and Denina have given their sanction to the main fact of the narrative.

In the latter part of this century we find another native of Ireland, named Dungal, trying his fortune, with far more valid claims to distinction, in France, and honoured in like manner with the patronage of her imperial chief. Of the letter addressed by this learned

* "Ma ben maggior maraviglia ci dovrà parere, che l'Italia non solamente allora abbia dovuto riconoscere da' barbari boreali il rinnovamento della milizia, ma abbia da loro dovuto apprendere in quello stesso tempo le scienze più necessarie; e che bisognasse dagli ultimi confini d'occidente et del nord far venire in Italia i maestri ad insegnarci, non che altro, la lingua latina. Carlo Magno nel 781 avea preposto alle scuole d' Italia e di Francia due Monachi Irlandesi."—*Delle Rivoluzioni d'Italia*, lib. viii. cap. 12.

† After mentioning that one of these Irishmen, Clement, had been detained in France by Charlemagne, Tiraboschi adds, "L'altro fù da lui mandato in Italia, e gli fù assignato il monastero di S. Agostino presso Pavia, ... acciochè chiunque fosse bramoso, potesse esser da lui istruito. Ecco il gran racconto del Monaco di S. Gallo, su cui è fondata l'accennata commune opinione. Ancorchè esso si ammettesse per vero, altro finalmente non potremmo raccogliene, se non che uno Scozzese fu mandato da Carlo Magno a Pavia, per tenervi scuola; ne ciò basterebbe a provare, che vi fosse tale scarsezza d' uomini dotti in Italia, che convenisse inviarvi stranieri."—*Storia della Letterat. Italian.*, tom. iii. lib. 3. cap. 1.

Scot * to Charlemagne, on the two solar eclipses alleged to have been observed in Europe in the year 810, I have already had occasion to speak; and, however superficial the astronomical knowledge displayed in this short tract, the writer has proved himself to have been well acquainted with all that the ancients had said upon the subject †; while both in his admission that two ‡ solar eclipses might take place within the year, and his doubt that such a rare incident had occurred in 810, he is equally correct. The very circumstance, indeed, of his having been selected by Charlemagne, though living a recluse, at that time, in the monastery of St. Denis, as one of the few European scholars worthy of being consulted on such a point, shows sufficiently the high estimation in which he was then held.

We find him some time after in Italy, acting as master of the great public school established at Pavia by Lothaire I.; with jurisdiction, too, over all the other subordinate schools which this pince founded in the different cities of Italy. § How high was the station assigned to the Irish professor, may be judged from a

* Having stated that Mabillon supposed Dungal to be an Irishman, the authors of the Hist. Littéraire de la France say, "Ce qui paroit appuyé tant sur son nom que sur ce que l'Hibernie fournit alors plusieurs autres grands hommes à la France."

† Dacher. Spicileg. tom. iii. The following remarks on Dungal's letter are from the pen of Ismael Bullialdus, "astronomus profundæ indaginis," as Riccioius styles him, whom D'Achery had consulted on the subject: — "Non est enim possibile ut in locis ab æquinoctiali linea paulo remotioribus, intra semestre spatium binæ eclipses solis cernantur, quod sub lineâ æquinoctiali, vel in locis subjacentibus parallelis ab eâ non longè descriptis accidere potest: intra vero quinquemestre spatium in eodem hemisphærio boreali vel austrino binæ eclipses solares conspici quæunt, quæ omnia demonstrari possunt utpote vera. Sed hujus Epistolæ Auctor Dungalus has differentias ignorasse videtur."

‡ In Struyk's Catalogue of Eclipses there occur, I think, four instances of a solar eclipse having been observed twice within the space of a year, viz. A. D. 237-8, 812-3, 1185-6, and 1408-9.

§ According to Denina, not merely the management of these schools, but the credit of founding them also, is to be attributed to Dungal: — "Fù nell 827 fatto venire di Scozia un monaco per nome Dungalo, famoso in quell' età pel suo sapere. Ebbe costui a reggere in particolare lo studio di Pavia, ma fù nello stesso tempo autore e quasi fondatore delle altre scuole d' Ivrea, di Torino, di Fermo, di Verona, di Vicenza, di Cividal del Friuli, alle quale dovevano concorrere ripartitamente gli scolari da tutte le altre città del regno Italico, siccome ordinò Lottario in suo famoso capitolare." — Lib. viii. cap. 12.

Capitular*, issued by Lothaire, in which, while the various cities where schools had then been founded are enumerated, the name of Dungal alone of all the different professors is mentioned, and every other institution is placed in subordination to that of Pavia.

A work written by this eminent man about the year 827, in answer to an attack made by Claudius, bishop of Turin, on the Catholic practice of honouring images and paying reverence to saints, is praised by a distinguished Italian writer, as displaying not merely a fund of sacred learning, but also a knowledge of polite literature, and of the classical graces of style.† In opposition to Claudius, who, reviving the heresy of Vigilantius, maintained that saints ought not to be honoured, nor any reverence paid to images, the Irish Doctor contends zealously for the ancient Catholic practice; and, instead of resorting to the aid of argument on a point solely to be decided by authority and tradition, appeals to the constant practice of the church from the very earliest times, which has been, he says, to revere, with the honour suitable to them, the figure of the cross, and the pictures and relics of saints, without either sacrificing to them or offering them the worship which is due to God alone. In honour of his countryman St. Columbanus, Dungal bequeathed to the monastery of Bobio a valuable collection of books, the greater part of which are now at Milan, having been removed to the Ambrosian library by cardinal Frederic Borromeo.‡

We have now arrived at a crisis in the history of Ireland, when it was her destiny to undergo a great

* This Capitular, as given by Tiraboschi, thus commences:—"Primum in Papia conveniant ad Dungallum, de Mediolano, de Laude, de Bergamo, de Novaria," &c. &c.—Tom. iii. lib. 3. cap. 1. Tiraboschi adds, "Chi fossero i Professori nelle altre città, non ce n'è rimasta memoria. Solo quel di Pavia si nomina in questa legge, cioè Dungalo."—Ib.

† "Cæterum liber ille Dungali hominem eruditum sacrisque etiam literis ornatum prodit, at simul in grammaticali foro ac Prisciani deliciis enutritum."—*Muratori.*

‡ A catalogue of the books belonging to the library at Bobbio, together with the names of the respective donors, has been preserved by Muratori (Antiq. Ital. vol. viii. Dissert. 43.), and, in this document, supposed to be written in the 10th century, the name of Dungal is thus mentioned:—"Item, de libris quos Dungalus præcipuus Scotorum obtulit beatissimo Columbano;"—meaning, to the monastery founded by Columbanus.

and disastrous change; when that long seclusion from the rest of the world, comprising a period commensurate with the whole of her authentic history, which, with a few doubtful exceptions, had kept her verdant fields untouched by the foot of an invader, was at length fiercely broken in upon; and a series of invasions, from the north of Europe, began to be inflicted upon her people, which checked the course of their civilisation, kept the whole island for more than three centuries in a continued state of confusion and alarm, and by dividing, even more than by wasting, the internal strength of the kingdom, prepared the way for its final and utter subjugation by the English. Before we plunge, however, into the dark and revolting details of this period, which, marked as they are with the worst excesses of foreign aggression, are yet more deeply disgraced by the stain of domestic treachery and strife, it may not be amiss to infringe so far on the order of historical synchronism, as to complete the rapid review we have here commenced of the many peaceful triumphs achieved by Irish genius during this century, as well at home as in foreign countries, leaving the warfare and political transactions of the same interval to be treated separately afterwards.

It should have been mentioned in the account of our celebrated scholar Virgilius, that in leaving Ireland he is said to have been accompanied by a Greek bishop, named Dubda; a circumstance which, coupled with the fact stated by Usher of there having been a Greek church at Trim, in the county of Meath*, which was so called even to his time, proves that the fame of the schools and churches of Ireland had attracted thither several Greek ecclesiastics; and accounts for so many of her own native scholars, such as St. Columbanus, Cummian, and, as we shall presently see, John Erigena, having been so perfectly masters of the Greek language. One of the chief arguments, indeed, employed by Led-

* Pontificem secum habuit proprium Dobdan nomine, Græcum, qui ipsum secutus erat ex patria..... Mirarer vero ex Hibernià nostrâ hominem Græcum prodiisse, nisi scirem in agro Midensi apud Trimmenses ædem sacram extitisse, quæ Græcæ Ecclesiæ nomen ad hunc usque diem retinet. —*Epist. Hibern. Sylloge*, note xvi.

wich, in his attempt to show that the early church of Ireland was independent of the see of Rome, is founded on those traces of connection, through Greek and Asiatic missionaries, with the East, which, there is no doubt, are to be found in the records and transactions of that period. Had such instances, however, been even numerous enough to prove more than a casual and occasional intercourse with those regions, it would not have served the purpose this reverend antiquary sought to gain: as, at the time when Christianity was first introduced into Ireland, the heads of the Greek church were on the best terms with the see of Rome; Asiatics and Greeks, during the very period to which he alludes, were raised to the chair of St. Peter; and it was not till many centuries after, that the schism of the Greeks divided the Christian world.

In addition to the evidence of their merits furnished by the recorded acts of the Irish missionaries themselves, it is but just to mention also some of those tributes of admiration, which their active piety and learning drew from their contemporaries. A curious letter addressed by the Saxon scholar Aldhelm *, to his countryman Eahfrid, who had just returned from a long course of study in Ireland, though meant, in its inflated style of irony, to throw ridicule on the Irish schools, is rendered, by the jealousy which it so involuntarily betrays, far more flattering than the most prepense panegyric: — "Why should Ireland," says the writer, "whither troops of students are daily transported, boast of such unspeakable excellence, as if in the rich soil of England, Greek and Roman masters were not to be had to unlock the treasures of divine knowledge.† Though Ireland, rich and blooming in

* The instructor of Aldhelm was Maidulph, an Irishman; though Mr. Turner (unintentionally, as I am willing to think) suppresses the fact, merely saying that Aldhelm had "continued his studies at Malmsbury, where Maidulf an Irishman had founded a monastery."—Vol. ii. Aldhelm himself became afterwards abbot of the monastery.

† "Cur, inquam, Hibernia, quò catervatim istinc lectores classibus advecti confluunt, ineffabili quodam privilegio efferatur: ac si istic, fœcundo Britanniæ in cespite, didascali Argivi Romanive Quirites reperiri minimè queant, qui cœlestis tetrica enodantes bibliothecæ problemata sciolis reserare se sciscitantibus valeant. Quamvis enim prædictum Hiberniæ

scholars, is adorned like the poles of the world with innumerable bright stars, it is Britain has her radiant sun, her sovereign Pontiff Theodore, nurtured from the earliest age in the school of philosophy: it is she possesses Adrian his companion, graced with every virtue . . . This is that Theodore who, though he should be surrounded by a circle of Hibernian scholars, as a boar in the midst of snarling dogs, yet as soon as he bares his grammatical tooth, puts quickly to flight the rebel phalanx." *

The tributes of Bede to the piety, learning, and benevolence of the Irish clergy, have been frequently adverted to in these pages; and while justice was thus liberally rendered to them by the English, we find a French author of the ninth century, Eric of Auxerre, equally zealous in their praise. "What shall I say," he exclaims, "of Ireland, who, despising the dangers of the deep, is migrating, with almost her whole train of philosophers, to our coasts?"†

Among the names that, early in the ninth century, adorn this list of distinguished Irishmen, are those of Sedulius and Donatus, the former the author, it is supposed, of the Commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul. From the many Irish scholars of this name that arose at different periods into reputation, considerable difficulty has been found in distinguishing their respective times and writings.‡ But it appears pretty certain, though both were natives of Ireland, that the author of the poems mentioned in a preceding part of this work is to be considered as a distinct person from the commentator on

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rus, discentium opulans vernansque (ut ita dixerim) pascuosâ numerositate lectorum, quemadmodum poli cardines astriferis micantium ornentur vibramininbus siderum; ast tamen," &c. &c. — *Epist. Hibern. Sylloge.*

* "Etiamsi beatæ memoriæ Theodorus summi sacerdotii gubernacula regens, Hibernensium globo discipulorum (ceu aper truculentus molossorum catastâ ringente vallatus) stipetur; limato perniciter Grammatico dente," &c. &c. — *Ib.*

† "Quid Hiberniam memorem, contempto pelagi discrimine, pene tota cum grege philosophorum ad littora nostra migrantem."—*Ad Carol. Calv.*

‡ See, for the various authorities on this subject, the Ecclesiar. Primord. 769., where the result of the mass of evidence so laboriously brought together seems to be, that the commentator and the poet were decidedly distinct persons.

St. Paul. In the subject and origin of one of the writings ascribed to the later Sedulius *, may be found a proof of the constant prevalence among his countrymen of that tradition respecting their origin from Spain, to which I have had occasion, at the commencement of this volume, to advert. On account of the reputation he had acquired by his commentaries on St. Paul, this abbot was despatched by the pope, with the dignity of bishop of Oreto, to Spain, for the purpose of reconciling some differences of opinion that had arisen among the clergy of that country. The Spaniards, objecting to the appearance of a stranger in such a capacity, made some difficulty as to receiving him; on which Sedulius, it is said, drew up his treatise entitled "the Concordance of Spain and Hibernia," in which, referring no doubt, to the traditions of both countries, he asserted the claims of the Irish to be considered as Spaniards, and to enjoy all the privileges of the Spanish nation.†

At the same period another accomplished Irishman, Donatus, having gone on a pilgrimage to Rome, was induced to fix himself in Italy, and became soon after Bishop of Fiesole. That he left some writings behind him, political as well as theological, may be collected from the epitaph on his tomb, composed by himself.‡ But of these productions the only remains that have reached us are some not inelegant verses, warmly in praise of his native land.§

* Thus mentioned by Hepidanus, the monk of St. Gall, under the year 818: —"Sedulius Scottus clarus habetur."

† Harris on Ware's Writers, art. Sedulius.

‡ "Gratuita discipulis dictabam scripta libellis
Schemata metrorum, dicta beata senum."

§ "Finibus occiduis describitur optima tellus
Nomine et antiquis Scotia dicta libris.
Insula dives opum, gemmarum, vestis et auri:
Commoda corporibus, aere, sole, solo.
Melle fluit pulchris et lacteis Scotia campis,
Vestibus atque armis, frugibus, arte, viris," &c. &c.

The translation of these verses given in O'Halloran's History, was one of the earliest pieces of poetry with which in my youth I was familiar; and it is purely in the indulgence of old recollections that I here venture to cite a few of the lines:—

"Far westward lies an isle of ancient fame,
By nature bless'd, and Scotia is her name,

But the most remarkable man that Ireland, or, perhaps, any other country, sent forth, in those ages, was the learned and subtle John Scotus; whose distinctive title of Erigena, or, as it was sometimes written, Eringena, points so clearly to the land of his birth, that, among the numbers who have treated of his life and writings, but a very few have ventured to contest this point. At what period he removed from Ireland to France cannot be very accurately ascertained; but it is conjectured to have been about the year 845, when he had already reached the age of manhood, and was doubtless furnished with all the learning of his native schools; and such was the success, as well of his social as of his intellectual powers, that Charles the Bald, king of France, not only extended to him his patronage, but made him the companion of his most secluded and familiar hours.

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For the early travels of this scholar to Greece and into the East, there appears to be no other foundation than a wish to account for his extraordinary knowledge of the Greek and other languages, as well as for that acquaintance with the mystic theology of the Alexandrian school, which he derived, in reality, from his study of the writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. A copy of these treatises had been sent as a present to Louis I., by Michael Balbus, the Greek emperor; and as additional reverence was attached, in France, to their contents, from the notion that Dionysius, the supposed author, was the same as St. Denys, the first bishop of Paris, Charles the Bald, with a view of rendering the work accessible to such readers as himself, who were unacquainted with Greek, appointed Erigena to the task of translating it into Latin.

Enroll'd in books,— exhaustless is her store
Of veiny silver and of golden ore.
Her fruitful soil for ever teems with wealth,
With gems her waters and her air with health;
Her verdant fields with milk and honey flow,
Her woolly fleeces vie with virgin snow.
Her waving furrows float with bearded corn,
And arts and arms her envied sons adorn."

The change effected in the theology of Europe by this book, as well as by the principles deduced from it afterwards in the translator's own writings, continued to be felt through a very long period. Previously to this time, the scholastic mode of considering religious questions had prevailed generally among the theologians of Europe* ; but the introduction of the mystic doctrines of Alexandria by John Scotus infused a new element into the theology of the West † ; and the keen struggle which then commenced between those opposing principles has formed a considerable part of the history of religious controversy down to the present day. It is not a little singular, too, that while, as an eminent church historian alleges, "the Hibernians were the first teachers of scholastic theology in Europe," so an Hibernian, himself unrivalled among the dialecticians of his day, should have been also the first to introduce into the arena the antagonist principle of mysticism.

The want of that self-restraint acquired in a course

* By Brucker (tom. iii. De Scholasticis) the commencement of the Scholastic theology is brought down so late as to the twelfth century: but it is plain from his own history that this form of theology had a much earlier origin; and by Mosheim the credit of first introducing it is attributed to the Irish of the eighth century.

"That the Hibernians," he says, "who were called Scots in this century, were lovers of learning, and distinguished themselves, in these times of ignorance, by the culture of the sciences beyond all the other European nations, travelling through the most distant lands, both with a view to improve and to communicate their knowledge, is a fact with which I have been long acquainted; as we see them, in the most authentic records of antiquity, discharging, with the highest reputation and applause, the function of doctor in France, Germany, and Italy, both during this and the following century. But that these Hibernians were the first teachers of the scholastic theology in Europe, and so early as the eighth century illustrated the doctrines of religion by the principles of philosophy, I learned but lately from the testimony of Benedict, Abbot of Aniane, in the province of Languedoc." He then produces his proofs, to which I refer the reader (Cent. viii. part ii. chap. 3.), and adds, "From hence it appears that the philosophical or scholastic theology among the Latins is of more ancient date than is commonly imagined."

† "Illos enim Latinis auribus accommodando chaos simul Alexandrinum, quod plerosque hactenus in Occidente latuerat, notum fecit, ansamque dedit ut cum theologia scholastica, mystica quoque extolleret, rationi sanæ et philosophiæ non minus inimica quam illa ut supra dictum."—*Brucker. De Philosoph. Christianor. Occident.* "And thus," adds Brucker, "that philosophic enthusiasm, which the Oriental philosophy brought forth, and Platonism nursed, which Egypt educated, Asia nurtured, and the Greek church adopted, was introduced, under the pretext and authority of a great apostolic name, into the Western churches, and there gave rise to innumerable mischiefs."

of training for holy orders, — for, by a rare fate in those days, Erigena was both a scholar and a layman, — is observable in the daring lengths to which his speculations respecting the nature of God are carried; speculations bordering, it must be owned, closely on the confines of Spinozism or Pantheism. Thus, "the soul," he says, "will finally pass into the primordial causes of all things, and these causes into God; so that, as before the existence of the world there was nothing but God and the causes of all things in God, so there will be, after its end, nothing else than God and the causes of all things in God." With the same Pantheistic view, he asserts that "all things are God and God all things, — that God is the maker of all things and made in all." It is plain that this universal deification is but another form of universal materialism; and the self-satisfaction, and even triumph, with which so good and pious a man — for such Erigena is allowed universally to have been — could come to such desolating conclusions, was but the result of that dangerous principle of identifying religion with philosophy, for which he has been so lauded by one of the most eminent of the modern apostles of rationalism.*

The notions just cited are promulgated in his Treatise on the Division of Nature, or the Nature of Things; and though in that work, which was written subsequently to his translation of Dionysius, there is to be found, in its fullest force, the intoxicating influence of the fountain at which he had been drinking, it is manifest that, even before he had become the interpreter of the dreams of others, his mind had already been stored, by the study

* "Remarquez qu'ils sont tous ecclésiastiques et leur philosophie est toute religieuse et toute chrétienne. C'est là leur commun caractère; ils ne font tous, sous ce rapport, que commenter cette belle phrase de Scot Erigène, 'il n'y a pas deux études, l'une de la philosophie, l'autre de la religion; la vraie philosophie est la vraie religion, et la vraie religion est la vraie philosophie.'" — *Victor Cousin, Cours de Philosophie*, tom. i. leçon 9.

The original passage here referred to is as follows: — "Quid est aliud de philosophia tractare, nisi veræ religionis, qua summa et principalis omnium rerum causa, Deus, et humiliter colitur et rationabiliter investigatur, regulas exponere? Conficitur inde veram esse philosophiam veram religionem, conversimque verum religionem esse veram philosophiam." — *De Prædestinatione.*

of the Platonic writers, with visionary notions of its own; as, in the share taken by him in the famous controversy with the monk Gotescalc, on the subject of predestination, he had, in the midst of those dialectic subtleties in which his chief strength and enjoyment lay, exhibited the same daringness of research into the mysteries of the Divine nature, which characterises those later flights of his genius to which I have adverted.* Combating the doctrine of Godescalc, who maintained, in accordance with the views of St. Augustin, and, afterwards, of Calvin, that the decrees of God had, from all eternity, preordained some men to everlasting life and others to everlasting punishment and misery, Erigena denied that there was any predestination of the damned; contending that the prescience of God extended only to the election of the blessed; since he could not foresee that of which he was not the author, and, being the source neither of sin nor evil, could not foreknow or predestinate them. In truth, identifying, as he did, all things with God, it was not possible for him to admit of permanent pain or evil in the system, without making that Being a sharer in them. Hence his doctrine, that the punishment of the damned, and even the wickedness of the devils themselves, will, some time or other, cease, and the blessed and the unblessed dwell in a state of endless happiness, differing only in degree.

While thus, in his notion of the final redemption even of the demons and the damned, he revived one of the heresies of Origen, his assertion of the power of the human will, and his denial of the corruption of human nature, betrayed a coincidence between his creed and that of

* "Scott Erigène avait puisé dans son commerce (avec les écrits de Dénis l'Aréopagite) une foule d'idées Alexandrines qu'il a développées dans ses deux ouvrages originaux, l'un sur la Prédestination et la Grace, l'autre sur la Division des Etres. Ces idées, par leur analogie avec celles de S. Augustin, entrèrent facilement dans la circulation, et grossèrent le trésor de la scholastique." — *Cousin*, ut suprà.

It will be seen that the mistake into which the learned professor has here fallen, can only be accounted for by his not having made himself acquainted with the works of which he speaks; as it is not possible for two systems to have less analogy with each other than those of St. Augustine and John Erigena upon the subject of predestination.

the heretic Pelagius, which he in vain endeavoured, by logical subtleties, to disguise. He had, in fact, gathered from almost every heresy some materials for his philosophy, and his philosophy, in turn, lent vigour and animation to effete heresy.

Besides the labours of this ingenious man which I have here mentioned, he entered likewise into the controversy raised, at this period, respecting the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in the sacrament. The treatise written by him upon the subject no longer exists; but the general opinion is, that he denied the Real Presence; and the natural bent of his mind to run counter to prevailing and sanctioned opinions, renders it most probable that such was his view of this now, for the first time, controverted mystery. In stating, however, as he is said to have done, that the sacrament of the Eucharist is not the "true body and true blood," he might have had reference solely to the doctrine put forth then recently by Paschasius Radbert, who maintained that the body present in the Eucharist was the same carnal and palpable body which was born of the Virgin, which suffered on the cross, and rose from the dead; whereas the belief of the Catholic church, on this point of doctrine, has always been, that the body of Christ is under the symbols not corporeally or carnally, but in a spiritual manner.*

The stories introduced into the general accounts of John Erigena, of his removing to England on the death of his patron, Charles the Bald, and acquiring a new Mæcenas in the person of Alfred, the great English king, are all manifestly fables; arising out of a confusion, of which William of Malmesbury and others availed themselves, between our Irish John — who, it is evident, remained in France till he died, — and a monk from Saxony, much patronised by Alfred, called John of

* Thus explained, in perfect consonance, as he says, with the doctrine of the Council of Trent, by the celebrated missionary, Veron: — "Ergo corpus Christi, seu Christus, est in symbolis spirituali modo seu spiritualiter, et non corporali seu carnali, nec corporaliter seu carnaliter."— *Regula Fid. Cathol.*, c. ii. § 11.

Atheling.* At what period Erigena died is not clearly ascertained; but it is concluded that his death must have occurred before the year 875, as a letter written in that year, by Anastasius, the Bibliothecarian, speaks of him in the past tense, as if then dead. †

The space devoted here to the account of this extraordinary person ‡ will hardly, I think, be deemed more than it deserves; since, in addition to the honour derived to his country from the immense European reputation which he acquired, he appears to have been, in the whole assemblage of his qualities, intellectual and social, a perfect representative of the genuine Irish character, in all its various and versatile combinations. Combining humour and imagination with powers of shrewd and deep reasoning,— the sparkle upon the surface as well as the mine beneath,— he yet lavished both these gifts imprudently, exhibiting on all subjects almost every power but that of discretion. His life, in its social relations, seems to have been marked by the same cha-

* The antiquary, Leland, though following the popular error in numbering John Scotus among those learned men who adorned the court of Alfred, yet expressly distinguishes him from that Saxon monk with whom Mr. Turner, among others, has strangely confounded him: — "Joannem monachum et Saxonia transmarina oriundum, Joannem Scotum qui Dionysii hierarchiam interpretatus est, viros extra quæstionem doctissimos, in pretio et familiaritate habuit."— *Leland. Commentar.*, cap. 115.

† This long and curious letter may be found in Usher's Sylloge. "It is wonderful," says the Bibliothecarian, "how that barbarous man (who, placed at the extremity of the world, might, in proportion as he was remote from the rest of mankind, be supposed to be unacquainted with other languages) was able to comprehend such deep things, and to render them in another tongue. I mean John Scotigena, whom I have heard spoken of as a holy man in every respect."

‡ I cannot resist the desire of adding to the other notices of this Irish scholar the following, from an eminent German writer: — "On place dans un ordre beaucoup plus élevé Jean Scot, né en Irlande (de là son surnom d'Erigène), homme fort lettré, esprit philosophique et indépendant, dont on ignore quelles furent les ressources pour atteindre à cette supériorité... On peut regarder comme des phénomènes singuliers pour son siècle ses connoissances en latin et en grec (quelques-uns y joignent la langue arabe) son amour pour la philosophie d'Aristote, sa traduction, si précieuse en Occident, de Dénys l'Aréopagite, ses opinions franches et éclairées dans les disputes de son temps sur la prédestination et l'eucharistie, sa manière de considérer la philosophie comme la science des principes de toute chose, science qui ne peut être distinguée de la religion, et son système philosophique renouvelé du néoplatonisme, où domine ce principe, —Dieu est la substance de toutes choses, elles découlent de la plénitude de son être, et retournent enfin à lui. Tous ces résultats si extraordinaires d'études laborieuses, et d'une pensée forte et originale, eussent pu faire plus de bien, si leur influence n'eût été arrêtée par les proscriptions de l'orthodoxie." — *Tenneman, Manuel de l'Hist. de la Phil.*

racteristic anomalies; for while the simplicity of his mind and manner, and the festive play of his wit, endeared him to private friends, the daring heterodoxy of his written opinions alarmed and alienated the public, and rendered him at least as much feared as admired.

Another Irish philosopher, named Macarius, who flourished in France about this period, is supposed by some writers to have preceded the time of Erigena, but, more probably, was either his contemporary, or came soon after him, as the doctrine promulgated in a treatise ascribed to his pen, that "there is but one soul in all mankind," had clearly its origin in the emanative system of that mystic school of philosophy with which the translator of the pseudo-Dionysius had, for the first time, made the Western Church acquainted.

CHAP. XIV.

STATE OF LEARNING AND THE ARTS IN IRELAND DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

In a preceding chapter of this volume there has been submitted to the reader most of the evidence, as well incidental as direct, suggested by various writers, in support of the belief, that the use of letters was known to the pagan Irish. But, perhaps, one of the most convincing proofs, that they were at least acquainted with this gift before the time when St. Patrick introduced among them the Christian doctrine, is to be found in the immediate display of mind and talent which the impulse of that great event produced, — in the rapidity with which they at once started forth as scholars and missionaries, and became, as we have seen, the in-

structors of all Europe, at a time when, according to some, they were but rude learners themselves. It is, indeed, far easier to believe—what there is besides such strong evidence to prove—that the elements of learning were already known to them when St. Patrick and his brother missionaries arrived, than that the seeds then for the first time sown should have burst forth in so rich and sudden a harvest.

To the question,—Where, then, are any of the writings of those pagan times? where the tablets, the manuscripts, even pretending to be of so ancient a date?—it can only be answered, that the argument involved in this question would apply with equal force to the two or three centuries succeeding the time of St. Patrick, when, as all know, not merely letters, but the precious fruits of those elements, literature and the sciences, had begun to spring up in Ireland. And yet, of that long and comparatively shining period, when the schools of this country attracted the attention of all Europe; when the accomplished Cummian drew from thence his stores of erudition, and Columba's biographer acquired in them his Latin style; when Columbanus carried to Gaul, from the celebrated school of Banchor, that knowledge of Greek and Hebrew which he afterwards displayed in his writings, and the acute Virgilius went forth, enriched with the various science which led him to anticipate the discovery of the sphericity of the earth;—of all that period, in Ireland, abounding as it was in scholars and writers extraordinary for their time, not a single authentic manuscript now remains; not a single written relic, such as ought to convince that class of sceptics who look to direct proofs alone, that the art of writing even existed in those days. The very same causes —the constant ravages of invasion and the blind fury of internal dissension* — which occasioned the destruction and loss of manuscripts between the time of St. Patrick

* "Nec mirum," says Ware, in the dedication prefixed to his account of Irish writers; "nam periisse liquet plurimorum notitiam, unà cum multo maxima operum eorum parte, cum Hibernia nostra seditionibus intestinis oppressa, quasi miseriarum diluvio inundata fuerit."

and the ninth or tenth century, account with still stronger force for the disappearance of all earlier vestiges of writing; and, in fact, the more recent and scanty at present are the remains of the acknowledged era of Irish literature, the more it weakens the argument drawn from the want of any such visible relics of the ages preceding it.*

We have seen that a manuscript copy of the Four Gospels, still extant, is said to have been written by the hand of St. Columbkill; and to this copy Dr. O'Connor triumphantly refers, as affording an irrefragable answer to those who deny the existence of any Irish manuscript of an older date than the tenth century.† But the zeal of this amiable scholar in the cause of his country's antiquities, and the facility with which, on most points connected with that theme, he adopts as proved what has only been boldly asserted, render even him, with all his real candour and learning, not always a trustworthy witness; and the result of the researches on this point, in Ireland, of one whose experience in

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Of the wanton destruction of Irish manuscripts which took place after the invasion of the English, I shall, in a subsequent part of this work, have occasion to speak. Many of these precious remains were, as the author of Cambrensis Eversus tells us, actually torn up by boys for covers of books, and by tailors for measures:—"Inter pueros in ludis literariis ad librorum sittibas, et inter sartores ad lascinias pro vestium forma dimetiendi."—"It was till the time of James I.," says Mr. Webb, "an object of government to discover and destroy every literary remain of the Irish, in order the more fully to eradicate from their minds every trace of their ancient independence."—*Analysis of the Antiq. of Ireland.*

* The absurd reasoning of the opponents of Irish antiquities on this point, has been well exposed by the English writer just cited:—"The more recent they can by any means make this date, the greater, in their opinion, is the objection to the authenticity of Irish history, and, to the pretensions of the national antiquarians to an early use of letters among their countrymen." He afterwards adds,—"If we possess so few Irish manuscripts written before the twelfth century, it is plain that, by adducing this circumstance, they the more clearly ascertain the extent of those disturbances which destroyed every historical record prior to the tenth, and which must have been far more effectual in causing to perish every remain of the fifth age."—*Id.*

† After quoting Usher's account of the Kells manuscript, Dr. O'Connor says,—

"Habemus itaque, ex indubitatæ fidei scriptoribus, ad nostra fere tempora extitisse antiquissimos codices, characteribus Hibernicis scriptos, qui longo ante seculum decimum exarati fuere; ita ut a veritate plurimum abesse consendi sunt qui nullum ante seculum X. codicem characteribus Hibernicis scriptum extare opinantur."—*Rer. Hib. Script. Ep. Nunc.*

the study of manuscripts, combined with his general learning, render him an authority of no ordinary weight*, is, that the oldest Irish manuscript which has been discovered in that country, is the Psalter of Cashel, written in the latter end of the ninth century.

For any remains, therefore, of our vernacular literature before that period, which have reached us, we are indebted to Tigernach and the annalists preceding him, through whom a few short pieces of ancient poetry have been transmitted; and to those writers of the tenth century, who, luckily taking upon themselves the office of compilers, have made us acquainted with the contents of many curious works which, though extant in their times, have since been lost. Among the fragments transmitted through the annalists are some distichs by the arch-poet Dubtach, one of St. Patrick's earliest converts, the antiquated idiom of which is accounted, by Irish scholars, to be in itself a sufficient proof of their authenticity.† A few other fragments from poets of that period have been preserved by the same trustworthy chronicler; and it appears on the whole highly probable, that while abroad, as we have seen, such adventurous Irishmen as Pelagius and Cælestius were entering into the lists with the great champions of orthodoxy,—while Sedulius was taking his place among the later Latin classics,— there were also, in Ireland itself, poets, or Fileas, employing their native language, and either then recently quickened into exertion by the growing intercourse of their country with the rest of Europe, or forming but links, perhaps, of a long bardic succession extending to remote times.

According as we descend the stream of his Annals, the metrical fragments cited by Tigernach become more numerous; and a poet of the seventh century, Cenfaelad, furnishes a number of these homely ornaments of his course. The singular fate of the monarch, Mur-

* Astle, Origin and Progress of Writing.

† "Carminis antiquitatem indicant phrases jamj obsoletæ, et a recentiorum idiomate alienæ."— *Ep. Nunc.* cv.

certach, who, in the year 534, was drowned in a hogshead of wine, seems to have formed a favourite theme with the poets, as no less than three short pieces of verse on this subject have been preserved by the annalists, written respectively by the three poets, Cernach, Sin, and Cenfaelad. In these, as in all the other fragments assigned to that period, there is to be found, as the learned editor of the Irish Chronicles informs us, a peculiar idiom and structure of verse, which denotes them to be of the early date to which they are assigned. It would appear, indeed, that the modern contrivance of rhyme, which is generally supposed to have had a far other source, may be traced to its origin in the ancient *rans* or *rins*, as they termed their stanzas, of the Irish. The able historian of the Anglo-Saxons, in referring to some Latin verses of Aldhelm, which he appears to consider as the earliest specimen of rhyme now extant, professes himself at a loss to discover whence that form of verse could have been derived.* But already, before the time of Aldhelm, the use of rhyme had been familiar among the Irish, as well in their vernacular verses as in those which they wrote in Latin. Not to dwell on such instances, in the latter language, as the Hymns of St. Columba, respecting whose authenticity there may be some question, an example of Latin verses interspersed with rhyme is to be found among the poems of St. Columbanus †, which preceded those of Aldhelm by near half a century. So far back, indeed, as the fifth century, another Irish poet, Sedulius, had, in some

* "Here then," says Mr. Turner, "is an example of rhyme in an author who lived before the year 700, and he was an Anglo-Saxon? Whence did he derive it? Not from the Arabs: they had not yet reached Europe."

† Beginning —

"Mundus iste transit et quotidie decrescit:
Nemo vivens manebit, nullus vivus remansit."

Though the rhymes or coincident sounds occur thus, in general, on the final syllable, there are instances, throughout the poem, of complete double rhymes. As for instance, —

"Dilexerunt tenebras tetras magis quam lucem;
Imitari contemnunt vitæ Dominum Ducem,
Velut in somnis regnent, unâ horâ lætantur,
Sed æterna tormenta adhuc illis parantur."

of the verses of his well-known hymn on the Life of Christ, left a specimen of much the same sort of rhyme.* As practised most generally, in their own language, by the Irish, this method consisted in rhyming at every hemistich, or, in other words, making the syllable in the middle of the line rhyme to that of the end; much in the manner of those verses called, in the twelfth century, Leonine, from the name of the writer who had best succeeded in them. According to this "art of the Irish†," as it was styled, most of the distichs preserved by Tigernach from the old poets were constructed; and it is plain that Aldhelm, whose instructor, Maidulph, was a native of Ireland, must have derived his knowledge of this, as well as of all other literary accomplishments of that day, from the lips of his learned master. How nearly bordering on jealousy was his own admiration of the schools of the Irish has been seen in the sarcastic letter addressed by him to Eaghfrid, who had just returned from a course of six years' study in that country, overflowing, as it would appear, with gratitude and praise.

In its infant state, poetry has been seldom separated from music; and it is probable that most of the stanzas cited by the annalists were meant originally to be associated with song. Of some of the juvenile works of St. Columbanus we are told, that they were "worthy of being

* The following lines from this hymn will afford a specimen of the Irish method of rhyming: —

"A solis ortus cardi*ne*, ad usque terræ limit*em*,
Christum canamus princip*em* — natum Maria virgi*ne*."

But it is still more correctly exemplified in a hymn in honour of St. Brigid, written, as some say, by Columbkill, but according to others, by St. Ultan of Ardbraccan. (See Usher, Eccles. Primord. 963.)

"Christum in nostræ insul*a* — quæ vocatur Hiberni*a*,
Ostensus est homini*bus* — maximis mirabili*bus*," &c.

† From the following account of the metrical structure of Irish verse it will be seen that it was peculiarly such as a people of strong musical feeling, and with whom the music was the chief object, would be likely to invent and practise: —

"The rhythm consists in an equal distance of intervals, and similar terminations, each line being divisible into two, that it may be more easily accommodated to the voice and the music of the bards. It is not formed by the nice collocation of long and short syllables, but by a certain harmonic rhythm, adjusted to the voice of song by the position of words which touch the heart, and assist the memory."— *Essay by Doctor Drummond, Trans. of Royal Irish Acad.*, vol. xvi.

sung*;" and a scene brought vividly, in a few words, before our eyes, by the Irish biographer of Columba, represents that holy man as sitting, along with his brethren, upon the banks of the beautiful lake Kee†, while among them was a poet skilled, we are told, in modulating song to verse, "after the manner of his art."‡ That it was to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument, called the Cruit, they performed these songs or chants, appears to be the most general opinion. In some distichs on the death of Columba, preserved in the Annals of the Four Masters§, we find mention of this kind of harp|| in rather a touching passage:—"Like a song of the cruit without joy, is the sound that follows our master to the tomb;" and its common use in the eighth century, as an accompaniment to the voice, may be implied from Bede's account of the religious poet Ceadmon, who, in order to avoid taking a part in the light songs of society, always rose, as he tells us, from table when the harp was sent round, and it came to his turn to sing and play. The Italians, who are known to have been in possession of the harp before the time of Dante, are, by a learned musician of their own country, Galilei, said to have derived it from Ireland; the instrument, according to his account, being no other than a cithara with many

* "Ad canendum digna," — so pronounced by his biographer Jonas.

† In the county of Roscommon.

‡ Alio in tempore S. Columba, cum juxta stagnum Cei, prope ostium fluminis quod Latine *Bos* dicitur (i. e. the Boyle river) die aliqua cum fratribus sederet, quidam ad eos Scoticus poeta devenit. Qui cum recessisset, Fratres ad Sanctum, cur, inquiunt, aliquod ex more suæ artis, canticum non postulasti modulabiliter decantari.—*Adamnan.* lib. i. c. 42.

§ Ad ann. 593. Written by Dallan Feargall, and thus translated by Dr. O'Connor:—

Est medicina medici absque remedio — est Dei decretum timor cum mœrore.
Est carmen cum cythara sine gaudio — sonus sequens nostrum Ducem ad sepulchrum.

|| Of this instrument, the harp, the Irish are said to have had four different species; the clarseach, the keirnine, the cronar cruit, and the creamtheine cruit; for all of which see Walker, *Hist. Mem. of Irish Bards*, Beauford, *ibid.*, *Appendix*, and Ledwich's *Antiquities*. What Montfaucon however, says of the different names given to the lyre, among the ancients, may also, perhaps, be applicable here:—"Among this great diversity I cannot but think the same instrument must often be signified by different names."

strings, and having, at the time when he wrote, four octaves and a tone in compass.

How little music, though so powerful in its influence on the feelings, either springs from, or is dependent upon, intellect, appears from the fact, that some of the most exquisite effusions of this art have had their origin among the simplest and most uncultivated people; nor can all that taste and science bring afterwards to the task do more, in general, than diversify, by new combinations, those first wild strains of gaiety or passion into which nature had infused her original inspiration. In Greece the sweetness of the ancient music had already been lost, when all the other arts were but on their way to perfection*; and from the account given by Giraldus Cambrensis† of the Irish harpers of the twelfth century‡, it may be inferred that the melodies of the country, at the earlier period of which we are speaking, was in some degree like the first music of the infant age of Greece, and partook of the freshness of

* See Anacharsis, chap. 27. *notes* v. vii. "It is remarkable," says Wood, "that the old chaste Greek melody was lost in refinement before their other arts had acquired perfection." — *Essay on Homer.*

† *Topograph, Dist.* 3. c. 11. This curious passage, which appears though confusedly, even to imply that the Irish were acquainted with counterpoint, is prefaced by a declaration that in their music alone does he find any thing to commend in that people: — "In musicis solum instrumentis commendabilem invenio gentis istæ diligentiam." The passage in question is thus translated in Mr. Walker's Hist. Mem. of the Irish Bards: — "It is wonderful how in such precipitate rapidity of the fingers, the musical proportions are preserved; and by their art, faultless throughout, in the midst of their complicated modulations, and most intricate arrangement of notes, by a rapidity so sweet, a regularity so irregular, a concord so discordant, the melody is rendered harmonious and perfect, whether the chords of the diatesseron or diapente are struck together; yet they always begin in a soft mood, and end in the same, that all may be perfect in the sweetness of delicious sounds. They enter on, and again leave, their modulations with so much subtilty, and the tinglings of the small strings sport with so much freedom, under the deep notes of the bass," &c. &c.

"Mirum quod in tanta tam præcipiti digitorum capacitate musica servatur proportio: et arte per omnia indemni inter crispatos modulos, organaque multipliciter intricata, tam suavi velocitate, tam dispari paritate, tam discordi concordia consona redditur et completur melodia, seu diatesseron seu diapente chordæ concrepent. Semper tamen ab molli incipiunt et in idem redeunt, ut cuncta sub jucundæ sonoritatis dulcedine compleantur. Tam subtiliter modulos intrant et exeunt; sicque sub obtuso grossioris chordæ sonitu, gracilium tinnitus licentius ludunt," &c. &c. — *Topograph. Hibern.* dist. 3. cap. 11.

‡ "Even so late as the eleventh century," says Warton, "the practice continued among the Welsh bards of receiving instructions in the Bardic profession from Ireland."—*Hist. of English Poetry.*

that morning of mind and hope which was then awakening around them.

With respect to the structure of the ancient Irish harp, there does not appear to have been any thing accurately ascertained; but, from that retentiveness of all belonging to the past which we have shown to have characterised this people, it appears most probable that their favourite instrument was kept sacredly unaltered; and remained the same perhaps in later times, when it charmed the ears of English poets and philosophers*, as when it had been modulated by the bard Cronan, in the sixth century, upon the banks of the lake Kee.

It would appear that the church music, likewise, of the Irish enjoyed no inconsiderable repute in the seventh century, as we find Gertrude, the daughter of the potent Maire du Palais, Pepin, sending to Ireland for persons qualified to instruct the nuns of the abbey of Nivelle in psalmody †; and the great monastery of Bangor, or Benchoir near Carrickfergus, is supposed, by Ware, to have derived its name from the White Choir which belonged to it.‡ A certain sect of antiquarians, whose favourite object it is to prove that the Irish church was in no respect connected with Rome, have imagined some mode by which, through the medium of Asiatic missionaries, her Chant or Psalmody might have been derived to her directly

* Alluding to such tributes as the following: —

"The Irish I admire
And still cleave to that lyre,
As our muse's mother;
And think, till I expire,
Apollo's such another." *Drayton.*

"The harp," says Bacon," hath the concave not along the strings, but across the strings; and no harp hath the sound so melting and prolonged as the Irish harp." — *Sylv. Sylvar.* See also Selden's Notes on Drayton's Polyolbion.

The following is from Evelyn's Journal: — "Came to see my old acquaintance, and the most incomparable player on the Irish harp, Mr. Clarke, after his travels . . . Such music before or since did I never hear, that instrument being neglected for its extraordinary difficulty; but in my judgment far superior to the lute itself, or whatever speaks with strings."

† "Pour instruire la communauté dans la chant des Pseaumes et la méditation des choses saintes." — Quoted from Fleury by D'Alton, Essay, 216.

‡ According to O'Halloran and Dr. O'Connor, the name Benn-Choir signifies Sweet Choir.

from the Greeks. But their whole hypothesis is shown to be a train of mere gratuitous assumption; and it is little doubted that, before the introduction of the Latin, or Gregorian Chant, by St. Malachy, which took place in the twelfth century, the style of music followed by the Irish, in their church service, was that which had been introduced by St. Patrick and his companions from Gaul.*

The religious zeal which, at this period, covered the whole island with monasteries and churches, had not, in the materials at least of architecture, introduced any change or improvement. Stone structures were still unknown; and the forest of oak which, from old heathen associations, had suggested the site of the church, furnished also the rude material of which it was constructed. In some few instances these wooden edifices were encircled by an enclosure of stone, called a casiol, like that which Bede describes as surrounding a chapel erected on Holy Island by St. Cuthbert. The first churches, indeed, of Northumbria, were all constructed of wood; and that of St. Finan, the Irish bishop, at Lindisfarn, was, as we are told, built after "the fashion of his country, not of stone, but of split oak, and covered with reeds."†

When such was the rude simplicity of their ecclesiastical architecture, it may be concluded that their dwellings were still more homely and frail; and in this, as in most of the other arts of life, their slow progress may be ascribed mainly to their civil institutions. Where possessions were all temporary, the natural motive to build durably was wanting. Instead of being brought together, too, in cities, where emulation and mutual interchange of mind would have been sure to lead to improvement, the separate clans of the Irish sat down, each in its hereditary canton, seldom meeting but in the field, as fellow combatants, or as foes. In this respect, the religious zeal which now universally

* See, on this subject, Lanigan, chap. xxvi. note 46.

† In insula Lindisfarnensi fecit ecclesiam episcopali sede congruam, quam tamen more Scotorum non de lapide sed de robore secto totam composuit atque arundine texit. — *Bede*, lib. 3. cap. 25.

prevailed supplied, in some degree, the place of industry and commerce; and, among the many civilising effects of the monastic institutions, it was not the least useful that, wherever established, they were the means of attracting multitudes around them, and, by examples of charity and self-denial, inspiring them with better motives than those of clanship for mutual dependence and concert. The community collected, by degrees, around the Oak of St. Brigid, at Kildare, grew at length into a large and flourishing town; and even the solitary cell of St. Kevin, among the mountains, drew around it, by degrees, such a multitude of dwellings as, in the course of time, to form a holy city in the wilderness.*

With regard to our evidence of the state of agriculture, at this period, the language employed, on such subjects, in the Lives of the Saints, our only sources of information, is too vague and general to afford any certain knowledge. The tending of sheep was, as we have seen, the task assigned to St. Patrick during his servitude; and it is, indeed, most probable that pasturage was then, as it continued for many centuries after, the chief employment of the people.† The memorable "Barn," however, of the apostle's friend Dicho, implies obviously the practice of hoarding grain; and from an account given, in the annals for the year 650, of a murder which took place in "the bakehouse of a mill," it would appear that water-mills ‡ had already been brought into use at that time. § There is, indeed,

* "In ipso loco clara et religiosa civitas in honore S. Coemgeni (Kevin) crevit quæ nomine prædictæ vallis in quâ ipsa est Gleandaloch vocatur."—Quoted by Usher, from a life of St. Kevin, Eccles. Primord. 956.

† It was for this reason that they appeared to Giraldus as not yet in his time emerged from the pastoral life:—"Gens agriculturæ labores aspernans, a primo pastoralis vitæ vivendi modo non recedens." That Spenser held it to be no less a cause than a sign of the want of civilisation, appears from the following strong sentences:—"To say truth, though Ireland be by nature accounted a great soil of pasture, yet had I rather have fewer cows kept, and men better mannered, than to have such huge increase of cattle, and no increase of good conditions. I would, therefore, wish that there were some ordinances made amongst them, that whosoever keepeth twenty kine should keep a plough going; for, otherwise, all men would fall to pasturage, and none to husbandry."—*View of the State of Ireland.*

‡ Annal. iv. Mag. ad ann. 647.—See Dr. O'Connor's note on the passage.

§ The introduction of water-mills into the British Isles is attributed, by Whitaker, to the Romans; and from hence, he says, this sort of mill is called *Melin* in the British, and *Muilan* or *Muiland* in the Irish.

mention made, in one of the Brehon Laws *, though of what period seems uncertain, both of carpenters and millwrights.

Another of these Irish Laws, said to be of great antiquity, shows that the practice of irrigating lands must have been in use when it was enacted : as it thus regulates the common right in the water : — " According to the Fenechas, the common right of drawn water belongs to the land from which it is drawn. It is therefore that all require that it shall run freely the first day over the entire land. For right in the water belongs to none but in the land from which it is drawn." †

The biographer of St. Columba, besides employing the terms ploughing and sowing, mentions as the result, on one occasion, of the abbot's prayers and intercessions, that they had an abundant harvest. The discipline of the monks, enjoining herbs and pulse‡ as their chief food, would lead to the culture of such productions in their gardens. The mention of honeycomb, too, as part of the monastic diet, concurs, with some curious early laws on the subject §, to prove their careful attention to the rearing of bees ; and not only apple-trees, but even vines, are said to have been cultivated by the inmates of the monasteries.

Of the skill of the workers in various metals at this period, as well as of the lapidaries and painters, we are told wonders by the hagiologists, who expatiate at length on the staff of St. Patrick, covered with gold and precious stones, the tomb of St. Brigid at Kildare, surmounted by crowns of gold and silver, and the walls of the church at the same place, adorned with holy

* Collectan. Hibern. No. 10.

† O'Reilly on the Brehon Laws, Trans. Royal Irish Academy, vol. xiv.

‡ " Cibus sit vilis et vespertinus monachorum, satietatem fugiens et potus ebrietatem, ut et sustineat et non noceat. Olera, legumina, farinæ aquis mixtæ," &c. — *Columban. Reg.* cap. 3.

§ " Whoever plunders or steals bees from out a garden or fort is subject to a like penalty as if he steal them out of a habitation, for these are ordained of equal penalty by law." Again, " Bees in an enclosure, or fort, and in a garden, are of the same account (as to property, penalty, &c.) as the wealth, or substance of a habitation." Extracted from inedited Brehon Laws, in an Essay on the Rise and Progress of Gardening in Ireland, by J. C. Walker. See Antholog. Hibern., vol. i., and Trans. Royal Acad. vol. iv.

paintings. But it is plain that all this luxury of religious ornament, as well as those richly illuminated manuscripts which Dr. O'Connor and others have described, must all be referred to a somewhat later period.

Of the use of war-chariots among the Irish *, in the same manner as among the Britons and the Greeks, some notice has already been taken; and this sort of vehicle was employed also by the ancient Irish for the ordinary purposes of travelling. The self-devotion of St. Patrick's charioteer has made him memorable in our history; and both St. Brigid and Columba performed their progresses, we are told, in the same sort of carriage. There is also a canon of the synod attributed to St. Patrick, which forbids a monk to travel from one town to another, in the same chariot with a female.†

Reference has been made, in the course of this chapter, to the early Brehon Laws, and could we have any dependence on the date assigned to such of these laws as have been published, or even on the correctness of the translations given of them, they would unquestionably be very important documents. Of those published by Vallancey it has been pronounced, by a writer not over credulous ‡, that they bear strong internal marks of antiquity; and while the comment on the several laws is evidently, we are told, the work of some Christian jurisconsults, the laws themselves wear every appearance of being of ancient, if not of Pagan, times. No mention occurs in them of foreigners, or of foreign septs, in Ireland. The regulations they contain for the barter of goods, and for the payment of fines by cattle and other commodities, mark a period when coin had not yet come into general use; while the more modern date of the Comment, it is said, is manifested by its substituting, for such primitive modes

* The king of the Irish Crutheni, or Picts, is described by Adamnan as escaping from the field of battle in a chariot: — "Quemadmodum victus currui insidens evaserit."

† Monachus et virgo . . . in uno curru à villa in villam non discurrant.

‡ Leland, Hist. of Ireland, Preliminary Discourse.

of payment, gold and silver taken by weight. Mention is made in them, also, of the Taltine Games and the Convocation of the States; and it is forbidden, under the pain of an Eric, to imprison any person for debt during these meetings.

With the single exception, perhaps, of the absence of any allusion to foreigners, there is not one of these alleged marks of antiquity that would not suit equally well with the state and condition of Ireland down to a period later, by many centuries, than that at which we are arrived; the payment by cattle and the law of the Eric having been retained, as we shall find, to a comparatively recent date.

With respect to the manner in which the Irish laws were delivered down, whether in writing or by tradition, there has been much difference of opinion; and the poet Spenser, in general well informed on Irish subjects, declares the Brehon Law to be "a rule of right unwritten." Sir John Davies, too, asserts that "its rules were learned rather by tradition than by reading." This is evidently, however, an erroneous representation. Without referring to the Collections of Judgments, or Codes of Laws, which are said to have been compiled under some of the heathen princes, we find, after the introduction of Christianity, the Great Code, or Seanchas-More, as it was called, drawn up with the aid, according to some writers, of St. Patrick*, but supposed by others to have been of a much later date.

In the seventh century, a body of the laws of the country was compiled and digested, we are told, from the scattered writings of former lawyers, by three learned brothers, the sons of O'Burechan, of whom one was a judge, the second a bishop, and the third a poet. The great number, indeed, of Irish manuscripts still extant, on the subject of the Brehon Laws, sufficiently

* Anno Christi 438 et regis Leogarii decimo, vetustis codicibus aliisque antiquis Hiberniæ monumentis undique conquisitis, et ad unum locum congregatis, Hiberniæ Antiquitates et Sanctiones Legales S. Patricii authoritate repurgatæ et conscriptæ sunt. — *Annal. Mag. IV.*

† Ware's Writers, chap. iv.

refutes the assertion of Spenser and others, that these laws were delivered down by tradition alone. In the very instance, mentioned by Sir John Davies, of the aged Brehon whom he met with in Fermanagh, the information given reluctantly by this old man, respecting a point of local law, was gained by reference to an ancient parchment roll, "written in fair Irish character," which the Brehon carried about with him always in his bosom.* The truth appears to be, that both tradition and writing were employed concurrently in preserving these laws; the practice of oral delivery being still retained after the art of writing them down was known; and a custom which tended much to perpetuate this mode of tradition, was the duty imposed upon every Filea, or Royal Poet, to learn by heart the Brehon Law, in order to be able to assist the memory of the judge.†

On the whole, whatever may be thought of the claims to a high antiquity of the numerous remains of the Brehon Law that have come down to us, of the immemorial practice of this form of jurisprudence among the ancient Irish, and of the fond, obstinate reverence with which, long after they had passed under the English yoke, they still continued to cling to it, there exists not the slightest doubt. In the fifth century, the Brehons were found by St. Patrick dispensing their then ancient laws upon the hills; and, more than a thousand years after, the law-officers of Britain found in the still revered Brehon the most formidable obstacle to their plans.

* Letter to the Earl of Salisbury, Collectan. vol. i.

† "In order to qualify the Filé," says Mr. O'Reilly, "for this important office, the rules for the education of the poetic professors required that every *Dos*, or poet of the third degree, before he was qualified to become a *Cana*, or poet of the fourth degree, should repeat, in the presence of the king and the nobles, the *Breithe Neimhidh*, i. e. the Law of the Degrees or Ranks, and fifty poems of his own composition."—*Essay on the Brehon Laws.*

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